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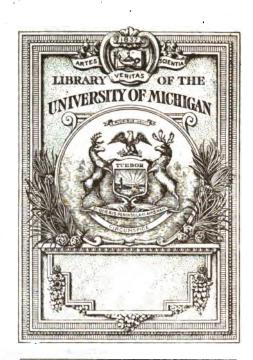
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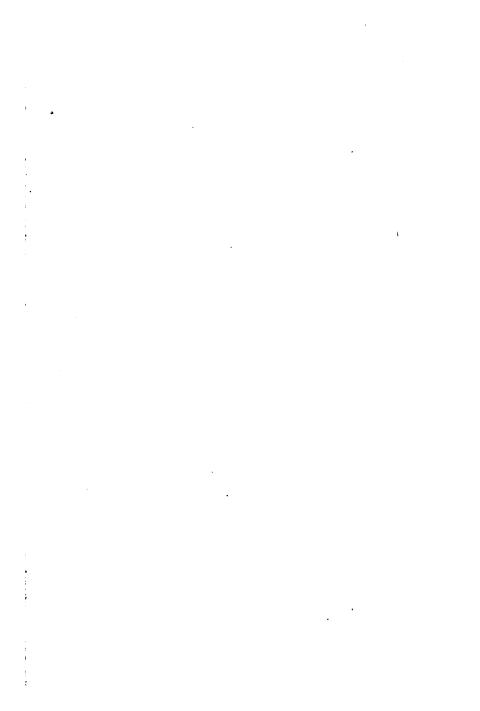
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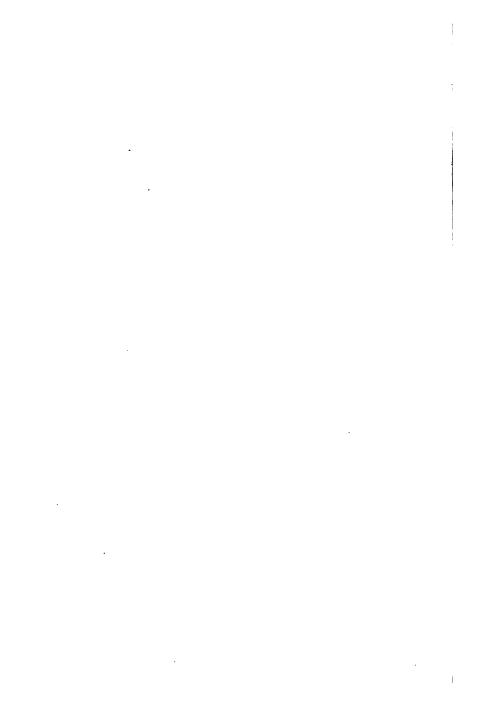
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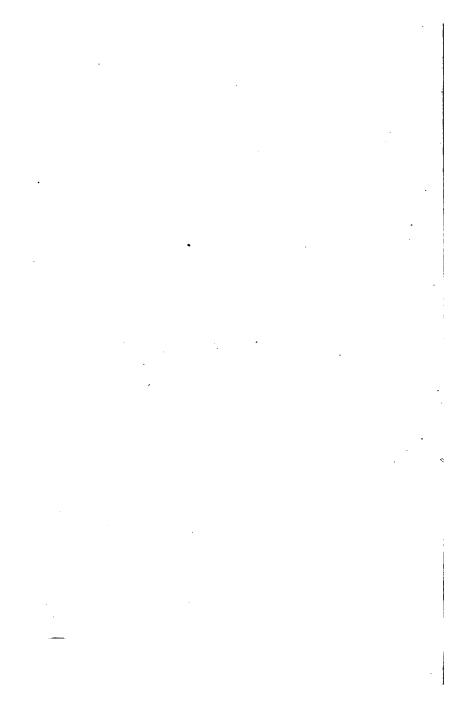
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THE N	NUGENTS	S OF	CARR	ICONN	A.	



# THE NUGENTS OF CARRICONNA

AN IRISH STORY

BY

### TIGHE HOPKINS

AUTHOR OF 'TWIXT LOVE AND DUTY, FOR FREEDOM, ETC.

NEW YORK
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1891

Authorized Edition.

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## THE NUGENTS OF CARRICONNA.

#### CHAPTER I.

#### BREAKFAST AT CARRICONNA.

"Good breeding and good sense gave all a grace."

"Is the milk so scarce that ye need be doling it out that way?" said Anthony at breakfast.

This was the new Anthony—the Anthony grown rich in an hour. Questions as to the doling out of milk, or any other article of food, were unknown heretofore; for everything was doled out, as a matter less of course than of necessity.

Miss Nugent, without so much as a glance into the milk-jug, which she knew very well contained a sufficient supply for two cups of tea for Anthony and one for herself, replied with more spirit than usual, "Ah, don't be talking, Anthony! Don't ye know very well that there's but one cow in the place, and a great deal of milk required?"

"'Deed, then, 'tis a poor thing for us to be living on

one cow; but I'll have another or two."

"Another cow or two, I declare, would oblige you to have another servant, for ye'll not be asking John to do more than he has to do now, I hope; the life is worn out of the poor man already."

"Well, but sure, what's hindering me but I'll have servants for me cows? I don't know how many cows I'll be wanting, nor how many servants neither, but I'm thinking that more of them both is required. Is it paupers we are, Barbara? Faith, I think that's what

ye're supposing, the way ye talk!"

"'Tis only the inside of a month since we were, at any rate," said Miss Nugent; "and 'tis just asraid of you I am now, Anthony, for ye're talking so great this month past that I think there'll be no controlling you. Don't I know well that the Nugents could always spend for six where they couldn't make for one? Take care now, Anthony, and let me tell you that I don't like to see you walking about with the end of your cheque-book showing above your pocket. Isn't it for all the world as if ye'd never had the likes of such a thing before, and daredn't let it from you a minute?"

Anthony looked rather ashamed at this, for there, to be sure, was the corner of his new cheque book sticking out of his coat-pocket, the visible sign and token of his new-gotten wealth, which accompanied him now wherever he went. He was fond of taking it out when no one was by, and writing himself a cheque for £100 or £500, cancelling it as soon as written, and in this way he had already wasted about a third of the book.

He thrust it down deep into his pocket as the door opened and Kate—who was kitchen-maid, housemaid and parlour-maid—entered with a dish of eggs and

bacon.

Miss Nugent was seated behind the old copper urn, where every day, winter and summer, for thirty years past, she had taken her place, at 8.30 a.m. to the minute. She was small and delicately made, with elegant little hands and feet, soft, colourless skin, not much wrinkled; features good, but somewhat pinched and shrunken; and eyes to which extreme short-sightedness, seldom aided by glasses, had given a kind of obliqueness that spoiled them rather.

Separated from his sister by about three yards' length of tablecloth—which was fine, but threadbare—Anthony sat at the opposite extremity of the board; tall and broad-shouldered, like all the male Nugents, but with a pronounced stoop which proceeded from physical in-

activity; a large head, and eyes restlessly rolling under thick eyebrows; iron-grey hair, not too tidy; face smooth-shaven, and a good deal of jaw, the lower part of which protruded slightly in a manner that did not

tend to soften the general expression.

Enter, as we stated, Kate Quinn, with eggs and bacon. Kate was forty, and had been fifteen years in the family. Eggs and bacon had not been by any means a daily dainty at Carriconna, a fact which might have been read on the broad Irish face of Kate, as she set the dish midway upon the great bare table, and uncovered it with a half-jealous, half-triumphant, "Great times, bedad!"

"Go out this minyut!" thundered Anthony, "and bring your manners with ye the next time ye come in, Kate Quinn, or ye'll face about and go home again; and 'tis bare-foot ye'll go, me fine girl, for ye'll remember 'twas bare-foot I took ye, and there's rent owing from

your father this very hour."

"Well, now, savin' yer honour's presence, 'tis no thing for yer honour to be throwin' me bare feet in me face in yer honour's own parlour, an' Miss Barbara there fornint ye," retorted Kate, "an' as for the bit o' rint, yer honour---"

"Kate Quinn! Kate Quinn! d'ye think that I'm going to argue with you, and—and the dish growing cold before me. Go below to your kitchen, I tell ye,

and be less bold."

"Bould, is it, faith! An' me that niver spake a dis respectful word in yer honour's hearin'! I'll go down, indade, though 'tis stirabout (porridge) we're atin' in the kitchen, an' not the likes of bacon wid eggs. 'Tis bould I am. is it?"

Miss Nugent, who never bore any part in these polemics, waited until Kate had brought the door into violent contact with its frame, and then said quietly:

"Anthony, I wonder at you to be talking in that way to the maids. You should be behaving very differently, I think, at this particular time. It's a time of trial for the two of us, Anthony, and I wouldn't have it supposed that your head is turned and your mind perverted by money that has come to you through no merit of your own."

"Then I think 'tis every one's head but me own is turned!" began Anthony again. "The whole house of ye may scold me to my face, and sorra word I'm let say at all. But wait! I'll have reckonings, so I will, and then ye'll see!"

"Get up now, like a good creature, and give me some bacon and an egg. Ye were a better man yourself on

plain oatmeal, Anthony."

"It's the best man of all I'll be, before I'm done. And a mighty queer one, too!" exclaimed Anthony. No wonder that Miss Nugent had her alarms.

#### CHAPTER IL.

#### SOME EARLIER NUGENTS.

"All these, and more like these, were bred at schools."

It might not be altogether impolite to break into the conversation at this point, and insinuate the remark that Anthony Nugent was of gentleman's estate. I find an earlier Anthony Nugent, gentn., 1697, a commissioner for raising a supply in his county for King William III.; and in 1703, on the magna panella of the county, is inscribed the name of Anthony Nugent de Carriconna, gentn. He it was who built the old house of Carriconna, on the property which he obtained by his wife's money, having previously gambled away a fine property of his own in another part of the country. He served the office of sheriff, and was very fond of a hanging, especially when the malefactor died hard.

Trustworthy genealogical particulars of the family are not easily obtained at this date, for the Carriconna estate, an extensive and well yielding property in the time of the elder Anthony, appears to have changed

hands more than once after his death, this branch of the Nugent family having always had a talent for scattering both money and acres. But a certain Meade Nugent is found in possession some time later, who was the posthumous hero of a lawsuit, wherein the point at issue was, whether Meade was legally capable of making a will and devising a certain portion of the property in an unexpected fashion. Meade's doctor, however, satisfied the court that his late patient was "neither an idiot nor a lunatic," and quite capable of managing property "if the matters were fairly put before him." It is related of this Meade Nugent that he was a sociable man, who had a horror of being without company; and that after the death of his wife he would go out on the high road shortly before his dinner-hour, and walk up and down there until he met some decent person, whom he then, without ceremony, invited to be his guest for the night; always, however, making the condition that the guest should drink not less than four bottles of port after dinner. A certain guest out-drank him one night. and was found by the butler at four o'clock the next morning flourishing an empty bottle over the prostrate form of Meade, who died in low spirits not long after-Talbot Nugent, who came next, was shot dead while standing at his own hall door one night; but I could never make out why. There was a low and very pig-headed member of the family, named Lavalin Nugent, generally disowned, who sat on a common jury during a trial for murder, and was for hanging the accused, while all his fellow-jurors were for letting him off. It was the period when, if a jury could not agree upon a verdict, they were carted to the borders of the county in the roughest conveyance that could be procured; the object being to jolt a verdict out of them along the road. The usual procession, headed by the judge and sheriff, was formed on this occasion, but before the county bounds were reached Lavalin Nugent's car—the last of the string—was overturned into a bog-drain nearly flush with the road; and Lavalin, who was never seen again, will doubtless be dug or cut some day out of a stratum

of good black turf, feet upwards, and in an excellent

state of preservation.

The "Buck" Nugent, who won a wife by his fine dancing; the Annesley Nugent, whose hobby was breeding mules, and who bred them with such evil tempers that he had to dose them with laudanum before he could cheat a customer into buying them; the Nagle Nugent, who was seldom on speaking terms with his tenants, and who, when he had formed them into a volunteer company of some sort, could not put them through the manual and platoon exercise, because they would never take the word of command from him—these all were gentlemen of considerable local repute in their day; but they are dead now, and why disturb their shades?

Tyrrell Nugent, the father of the present Anthony, rebuilt a portion of Carriconna House, and added to it, apparently in the hope of making it a comfortable dwelling, notwithstanding that this was impossible. It was a plain white house, with considerable frontage, and not quite high enough for good looks; with large, well-proportioned rooms, which in Anthony's time were furnished in a sparse and chilling fashion. Long flagged passages reached the entire length of the house on both landings, with stairs at each end, and the dwelling part returned at both extremities and formed a compact and inclosed yard. These long uninterrupted passages made the house miserably cold from November to May, and so dreary that the family ghost—a mild, middle-aged spectre, with a beard and military cloak—had the

The south return of the house was the situation chosen by Anthony's father for his own architectural experiments. Here he built a grand vinery, from which he intended to introduce the vines into his own bedroom on the ground floor, and train them to the ceiling joists, so that he might pluck and eat the fruit as he lay on his back in bed. The holes through which the vines were brought were still there in Anthony's day, but the vines never yielded, and the curious husbandman had not even the poor satisfaction of condemning his grapes as sour.

principal use of them after nightfall.

Anthony had let the house remain pretty much in the state it was in at his father's death. That consumption of the purse with which the family had been afflicted during twenty years or more had effectually held him Not that the poverty of the Nugents had been exactly of the grinding sort that depresses heart as well as body, but it had obliged Anthony and his sister to dine at two instead of seven, and to let the old spayined mare which took them to church do an occasional turn at the plough, to leave the grass to grow between the stones in the yard, and in patches on the drive, to mend nothing that could be left unmended, to receive none but the most familiar company, never to go out except amongst the same; and to do a variety of other things to which, as Shakespeare says, "my poverty, but not my will, consents."

Anthony had brooked his poverty not too grudgingly. being a man who could diet himself with reasonable cheerfulness according to the contents of his cupboard. Although a countryman born and bred, he had no rural tastes that cost money. He was not a sportsman. Since "Buck" Nugent's day there had been no sportsmen in the family. Anthony was never known to fire a gun but once (and it was not a gun, by the way, but a blunderbuss), and he fired it from his bedroom window at a man who rang him up at midnight, with a mask on his face, to inquire the way to a town which had no place in Irish geography. He was no horseman, and had never ridden to hounds but once, when he was carried against his will on a mare that he had borrowed from the priest; but the mare did not throw him, and Anthony was the only man who ever rode her without a fall.

As for farming, he seemed to consider inherited land as a responsible creature, which ought to go on producing in an automatic way, whether it were cared for or not. If anything went wrong with the crops or the cattle, that was their affair, and not his. The herd, or cattle-tender, went to him one night to say that a heifer had fallen into a bog-hole, and could not be lifted out.

"Let it stay there, as an example to the rest," said Anthony.

And the estate, which had shrunk to something less than a thousand acres, was left, like the beast in the bog-hole, to take care of itself; and Anthony, perversely blind to, or careless of, his own interests; obstinate and self-willed beyond cure; dogmatic, crotchety, and as full of whims as a barn of rats, lived a strange, abstracted, half-awakened, murky sort of life; and his tenants believed that he could put them under spells.

All at once, Anthony became a very rich man.

How he acquired his riches is quickly told; indeed the story can be finished before Anthony has finished his breakfast, which always was a leisurely meal with him, and not likely to be less so now that he has something pleasant to dream about while eating.

Anthony got his money out of wool.

The wool was none of his, for, as Miss Nugent has said, her brother acquired his wealth through no merit of his own: it was his deceased brother's.

Shortly before the period of the commencement of this story Anthony had had a brother, Kedagh Nugent, ten years younger than himself, who, not pleased with poverty which was barely genteel and entirely idle, left the estate on which he had served Anthony in the capacity of agent, and went to Australia in a sailing-ship, to try what sheep-farming would do for his pocket.

Now the Nugents, who had farmed for generations in Ireland, had their own opinion (and I don't say much for it) as to the gentility of farming in Australia. Anthony, for example, who saw nothing discreditable in letting his own lands go to rack and ruin, was grievously upset, and exceedingly offended, when his younger brother declared that he was sick of muddle on the estate and want in the house, and would go and forage for himself at the Antipodes, beginning, if needs must, as a common farm servant.

Anthony protested, and endeavoured to stay him; but off Kedagh went, a few weeks after his resolve was made, and for years there was a great coolness on

Anthony's side. Kedagh made a fortune, and lost it: made another, and stuck to it. He wrote from time to time, inquiring for news of Carriconna, and always saying that help of any sort, if acceptable, would be forthcoming. For a long while the only answers these letters received were penned by Barbara, but by-and-by Anthony began to add postscripts to his sister's epistles, and in the course of years got to the length of a whole letter. But the intercourse was not constant, a certain soreness always remaining on the part of Anthony, who had had a great fondness for his brother. They heard of Kedagh's marriage, and of the birth of a daughter; and in after years vague words in the letters of Kedagh breathed into the minds of the readers a suspicion that the father had not been greatly blessed in his child. He spoke of her as clever and ambitious, and mentioned her desire to be sent to complete her education in Europe. She was the only child.

The last letter but one that Kedagh wrote announced the death of his wife, and his own intention to visit his brother and sister in the old home. Weeks went by and Kedagh's coming began to be looked for at Carriconna. But the weeks stretched into three months and the emigrant had not returned, nor was there any further word from him. Towards the middle of the fourth month Anthony received a letter in pencil, scarcely legible, wherein Kedagh described himself as badly injured by a fall from a buck-jumping horse, and not likely soon to quit the bed from which he wrote. The message which followed this was cabled by Kedagh's steward, and it told, with the laconism of such messages, the news of Kedagh's death.

Then a lawyer's letter, of almost equal brevity with the cablegram, conveying the startling information—for

the cablegram, conveying the startling information—for to Anthony it was nothing less—that he had been bequeathed all but a fractional portion of his brother's

fortune.

The news affected Anthony almost to the degree of stupefaction. A man brisker and more open-eyed than he in regard to good solid mundane matters might have had his thoughts about the pile which he knew was accumulating on the Australian sheep-run; but Anthony never had any. And it was in keeping with his character that at the first blush he was more angry than pleased that the money had been left to him. He knew that he had done nothing to deserve it, and as a man greatly disliking sudden changes of any sort, whether pleasant or otherwise, he was even annoyed at the prospect of having to spend in some way or other an income seven or eight times larger than he had ever before possessed. He was only now beginning to take his riches kindly, and to dream strange dreams as to the possibilities that lay within them.

#### CHAPTER IIL

#### LADY KITTY.

"Isn't it a great pity," said Miss Nugent, before breakfast was over, "that Arthur couldn't be home with us now?"

"Eh?" answered Anthony, peering at his sister from under his shaggy, shifting eyebrows. "Well, I wouldn't be grudging anything to Arthur; there's abundance for him when he comes; but it's my belief that he's in no

hurry to be home again."

"Indeed, there was no great cheer for him when he was at home, poor boy, and 'tis but small wonder that he was glad to travel when he had the chance. But I'm right sure by his letters that he's often thinking of us,

and won't be too sorry when he's back."

Like Kedagh, Anthony had but one child—his son Arthur, who cannot yet be introduced in his proper person since he was at this time somewhere in Central Africa, attached to an exploring expedition, organized and headed by Anthony's neighbour and friend, Lord Kilcreevy. Arthur was just twenty-seven; a rover by nature, a good linguist, and a favourite with most people

He was more than a favourite with Miss Nugent, who had been the closest to him during the fifteen years that had passed since his mother's death. Barbara would have liked Arthur at her elbow at this crisis in the affairs of the family, when Anthony's brain was swelling with mysterious projects for scattering his new-found hoard.

"Well, ye know, we might see him before a great while," said Anthony. "Didn't he tell you in the last letter you had from him that he'd been down with a trifle of fever, and Kilcreevy was minded to send him home again? I'd not be surprised at all to see him one of these days."

"Indeed, and I would be just delighted, only I'd not like to think of the poor boy making his way home without one to mind him, and he sick maybe," said Miss

Nugent.

"D'ye think Kilcreevy would let him go home that way now, Barbara? Be easy now, be easy! Ye'll have him home presently, and, I dare say, with a strapping black nurse behind him," and Anthony wiped his lips with his pocket-handkerchief and rose up from the table.

"Ye'll order a few dozens of table-napkins, if you please, Barbara, with the crest on them," he said, returning the handkerchief to his pocket. "How came

we without them so long?"

"See now, Anthony," replied Miss Nugent smartly, "don't be bothering me at present about little foolish things of that sort. I've a great deal to do before I trouble meself about table-napkins. Is there a table-cloth in the house that's fit to spread before company? And will ye look at the carpet under your feet, Anthony, that's worn to threads!"

"Barbara, Barbara, be aisy now, be aisy!" said Anthony, waving his great bony hand at her. "There's not a mortial (mortal) chamber in the house but I'll have a foot thick in carpet; and I'll have mebbe as manny as twinty table-covers for every table, that ye can just be whippin' 'em aff and an as ye please."

Anthony's brogue, by the way, and Miss Nugent's too, always came out strongly under excitement. As

for Anthony's, it hung about him always, and he would not part with it; but Barbara could drop the Irish

idiom when talking with any one but her brother.

"What's this the Scripture says about the vanishing of riches, Anthony?" she replied. "Be easy yourself, and don't talk as if the skies would shower gold on us at your bare bidding."

But this was lost on Anthony, who had gone to find

his boots.

His boots, as usual, were being cleaned, at the moment when they were wanted, by John Maher, Anthony's coachman, groom, valet and butler, who left one task half finished for another, as fancy or necessity directed, and had never completely done with anything. He had certainly never done with soliloquizing.

"We'll be wearin' better boots nor thim now," Anthony heard him muttering as he came up. "Thim! I don't call thim boots at all; thim's mere holes for the fayt! Morrow mornin' to yer honour! Have ye any new notions in yer honour's head this mornin'?"

"Give me those boots here, and don't be foolish," growled Anthony. "What would I do with new notions in me head? Haven't I care enough to keep a roof

above me?"

"D'ye hear that now!" said John to his blacking-brush. "Oh! 'tis a great humoristic man he is, an' no mistake. An' to listen to him a pairson would think he was just plain Anthony Nug'nt, widout the price of a drink. But wait till I see him agin in his proper style, in a red huntin'-coat an' top-boots an' spurs, on the back of a fine leppin horse that'll show the time o' day to the whole country round! My! but yer honour'll be a terrable figure of a man then, an' meself behint ye in me new liv'ry."

"Ye'll wait a long spell of a day to see that, John Maher," grunted Anthony. "And ye needn't think I'll be wasting me substance on red coats and lepping

horses."

"'Deed I'm afeard not!" said John to himself as Anthony went off with his long, heavy stride. "The

ould times is gone, an' the new ones isn't like 'em. Av I git buttons to me coat I'll be lucky, lave alone a new shuit."

Now, what thoughts were in Anthony's mind as he stood with his hands behind his back, staring up at the great square tower by the lake? Anthony had a big project in connection with this tower. It had been originally a high castellated edifice, of several storeys or floors, erected probably after the invasion of Henry II., when the Anglo-Norman chiefs were spreading themselves over the country. It was built of the common rock of the neighbourhood, and even at that day had an altitude of nearly eighty feet. The giant Irish ivy overgrew the greater portion of it, and there were long narrow slits in the walls which had served for windows.

Anthony, looking up to the top floor of the tower, said to himself, "Tis as if it were put there for the very

purpose."

Of all the odd notions, now, that could prick the brain of a man like Anthony, surely the oddest was that he would turn astronomer and study the stars. would build an observatory on the top of the tower, and study the stars. The idea, I think, grew out of a curious nocturnal habit, to which he had for years been addicted: a habit of patrolling his garden in the dead of night, in all seasons and all weathers; whistling loudly to himself and staring up into the sky. At any rate his first thought was when he touched Kedagh's money that he would get a great telescope and plant it on the top floor of his tower and study the stars. He was very secret on the subject, and almost mum to Barbara, who was unsympathetic, thinking there was moonshine enough on the Carriconna estate without the help of telescopes. But nothing short of his decease would ever have turned Anthony from a purpose he was set upon. He got his telescope, as will be seen, and as will also be seen, the observatory on the tower played a considerable part in his subsequent fortunes.

A loud clattering of hoofs behind him, on the

shingly shore of the lake, interrupted Anthony's cogitations.

He turned about and saw a bright bay pony, with a lady on its back, coming full speed towards the tower.

"Take care of the wall! Take care of the wall!" shouted Anthony; for there was a small stone wall, just the other side of the tower in the direct line of the rider.

"Take care of yourself!" cried the lady, scarcely slackening rein. "Now then—one—two—whoo—oop!"

And I ady Kitty and her pony alighted on Anthony's side of the wall.

"Well, I've caught you, haven't I?" she said,—
"star-gazing in broad daylight! I nearly rode over you,
and you would have deserved it. What are you doing,
Mr. Nugent?"

"Well, now, I'm making the greatest plans that ever were," said Anthony; and I declare he smiled as he looked at Lady Kitty. But every one smiled who looked into that delicious, laughing face. Lady Kitty was to come of age in a few months, but she looked not more than seventeen; sitting lightly there on her rakish pony, her dark eyes and cheeks aglow; her slim figure swaying this way and that with every movement of the pony, and tiny curls of dark, silky hair blown about her forehead and neck.

She was often at Carriconna, and there was a great bond betwixt her and Barbara. What this bond was I won't say; but at this time news was expected every day from Arthur.

"Well, come, tell me your great plans," said she.

"Ye'll laugh at me, I know ye will; but listen now. I'm after planning to put a great telescope on the top here; and I'll turn astronomer, and study the stars; and I wouldn't be one bit surprised if I made discoveries that'll do great good to the world, for ye see I'll come fresh to the work, knowing nothing at all about it. What d'ye say to that now, me Lady Kitty?"

"Oh, I like it! Every rich man ought to do good to

the world."

"Is that so, d'ye think? But who's telling ye I'm that rich?"

"Arrah, whisht now," said she, mocking his brogue, and don't be playin' wid me! Don't I know, Misther

Nug'nt, how rich y'are."

"If I was Crasus himself I'd be broke with the claims that are on me!" returned Anthony. "And what are ye come for yourself, Lady Kitty?"

"Oh, I've come begging, too!"

"To be sure, to be sure! 'Tis the way with all of ye. That poor gossoon, the postboy, is kilt entirely with the

weight of the begging letters he brings me."

"Oh, well, you know, Mr. Nugent, it's no use being rich if you don't help everybody. But, talking of help, who's going to help you with your telescope, if you don't know anything about it?"

"Well, I'm thinking a good deal of that. Ye wouldn't

help me yourself now, for instance?"

"How could I? I don't know anything more about it than you do. But I'll tell you what you must do. You must put an advertisement in the newspapers. Don't have a man; he'll steal all your discoveries for himself. You must have one of those clever girls who take degrees at colleges. Advertise for her, and she'll come directly. She'll come in hundreds I shouldn't wonder!"

"That's a great notion entirely," said Anthony.
"Come up to the house and we'll talk about it."

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE ADVERTISEMENT.

LADY KITTY CHEVENIX hooked her pony's reins over the rusty staple in the wall just against the hall-door, where many generations of Nugents and their visitors had hitched their horses. The rusty staple was just above the three stone steps upon which ladies had mounted to

seat themselves behind their lords, in the days when one horse carried two riders. Then my lady gathered the folds of her dark green habit in one bare white hand, and

followed Anthony into the house.

The brass-bound oaken table in the hall, beneath which stood a brass-bound oaken turf-bucket, was piled up with letters and circulars, at which Anthony gave a vicious and contemptuous poke, by way of asking Lady Kitty's attention thereto.

"See that, now!" said he. "Didn't I tell ye? There's just the way of it!" and was passing on into the

dining-room.

"But don't you want to read them?" exclaimed Kitty. "You ought to read them, you know. Just look at the postmarks! They're from all parts of the country, and from England too; and here's one from Scotlane, and——"

"And there's one from a great way farther than Scotland!" called Miss Nugent from the dining-room.

"Eh?—ho! ho!" laughed Anthony; for her ladyship, without so much as another glance at the appeals of indigent Ireland, England and Scotland, darted into the dining-room, and across to where Miss Nugent was deep in a letter closely written on foreign paper in a good masculine hand.

"Attend to your own letters, Mr. Nugent," said Lady Kitty. "They want your best attention. Good morning to you, Barbara. Please to turn back to the first page; you're reading it a great deal too quick."

And, without further salutation or leave asked, she put her arm round Barbara's shoulder, and began to read

the letter from Africa.

Anthony, with less impatience, began, not to read, but to scan, a selection from his own correspondence. Byand-by he looked up.

"Well," said he, "have they heard tell of me in Africa? Have the tribes smelt out me little store? Is

it the Naygus that's wantin' a thrifle of aid?"

"He's coming home, I tell you! He'll be here very shortly," replied Miss Nugent.

"The Naygus?"

"Out with your Negus! Arthur's coming home, I

tell you-Arthur!"

"I believe he has forgotten who Arthur is," said Lady Kitty. "Your sister is informing you, Mr. Astronomer, that Mr. Arthur, your son, is on the point of returning from Africa."

"Oh, well, come now, that's great news! But you're quite sure 'tis not the Naygus? What's bringing him

home?"

"Here, read the letter for yourself. He has got rid of his fever, but has been ailing ever since, and Lord Kilcreevy thinks he had better go no farther."

"He must have started before this," said Lady Kitty. "Of course he must," said Miss Nugent. "His

"Of course he must," said Miss Nugent. "His letter is three months old. It can't be very long now till he's here, I should think."

"I must make haste and spend while there's no one to come betwixt me and me projects," was Anthony's comment upon this.

"There's only one project you should be thinking of spending on," returned Miss Nugent, "and that's to set

up Arthur and Kitty."

"That's a great project she has!" said Anthony, half to himself and half at Lady Kitty; but with a laugh which was more good-humoured than malicious.

"'Tis a better than any that's in your mind; isn't it

now, Kitty dear?"

"I think it's a beautiful project," said her ladyship. "Won't you set us up, Mr. Nugent?"

"And how will I do it, if ye please?"

"The stupidness of you!" exclaimed Miss Nugent. "Haven't we talked about it since who knows when? Would the poor boy have gone off, to get the fever in Africa—let alone the chance of sunstrokes and poisoned knives—if we'd been able to set the pair of them up decently in the land of their birth? Didn't Lady Frayne tell us, two hundred times at least that she wouldn't have Kitty marry Arthur, or any other person, if he couldn't show suitable money in the mouth of his

sack? and she's entirely right. Hasn't your mother said that, me dear, two hundred times at least?"

"Oh, more times than that, Barbara. She says it to

me every morning at breakfast."

"See that now!" said Miss Nugent triumphantly.
"Every morning at breakfast! And a right sensible woman, I declare."

"Oh, the very sensiblest woman I'm acquainted with,

indeed!" said Anthony.

"Very well," continued his sister. "Now, here's money you know so little what to do with that you're talking of buying cows, carpets and telescopes, and I don't know what besides; and Arthur and Kitty here not provided for—no, nor so much as thought of!"

"Aisy, now, aisy!" said Anthony. "Maybe I'm after providing for them. Am I not telling ye every hour, Barbara, that ye don't know the one half of what's

in me mind?"

- "Well, tell me, now, when will ye marry them?"
- "Aisy now, again! I didn't say that was in me mind at all."

"Oh, 'tis you that are the right tiresome man!"

"Well, now, see here—see here; isn't it better for us to wait till the boy comes home, and ask him whether he's for marrying the girl, or no? How do we know what heart he has for her at present, or whether he has a heart for her at all? Isn't it possible the fever has given him a distaste for her?"

"All that's very reasonable, I'm sure," said Lady Kitty, who, being quite accustomed to these discussions respecting Arthur and herself, no longer felt called upon

even to blush for them.

"Well, I give you up, the pair of ye!" said Miss Nugent. "Ye're not rational company. Y'r mother and meself, Kitty, are the only amenable creatures left in Ireland at this minute."

"Very good, Barbara! And now there is another extremely important matter to talk about. Mr. Nugent and I will have this all to ourselves. Are you sure, Mr.

Nugent, that the tower is strong enough?"

"For what?" interposed Miss Nugent, who was drawing on her old doeskin gloves before setting out on her morning tour through the garden.

"Oh, don't you know, Barbara! Mr. Nugent is

going to build an observatory up there."

"It's his tomb he'll build at the same time, I think," responded Miss Nugent, "for I'm perfectly sure there's not strength enough in the tower this minute to support such an extravagant notion. And why Anthony wants to be building new-fashioned things like that, I don't know, seeing all the useful work that's required about the place and the land. But, indeed, I don't know what's come to Anthony. Maybe he's being tried in some way, and I hope he'll come well out of it, poor man."

"'Deed, I hope he will, the poor man!" ejaculated

Anthony.

"'Deed, I hope so, too!" added Kitty, quite familiar with this mood of Miss Nugent's.

"I suppose you have thought about the strength of the tower, Mr. Nugent?" continued Lady Kitty; "for

that's really a most serious matter."

"There's not a thing I don't think about; and it's well for everybody I have such a head upon me," answered Anthony. "Sure the tower's waiting this hundreds of years for no purpose on earth but this."

"Indeed, I'm afraid it's waiting to tumble about some

person's ears," said Miss Nugent.

"Whose ears, maybe now?" inquired Anthony.

"Well, ye know, dear," said Miss Nugent, addressing herself to Lady Kitty, "we've a story or a legend, or whatever ye may call it, that the tower is to fall one day, and one of the Nugents with it. 'Tis just a tower of Silo'm in the family, and for meself I wouldn't cross the shadow of it for a great deal."

"Ye wouldn't, I'm sure," affirmed Anthony. "But there's another thing ye might do, like a good woman: have the red room put in a nice, genteel state, for there

might be company down upon us this any time."

"The red room!" said Miss Nugent. "And why

the red room, if ye please? When Arthur comes, won't

he have the room he slept in always?"

"Oh, ye may have Arthur's room ready, too, to be sure!" replied her brother. "Tisn't that room I was thinking of, for I know there's small need of asking you to have Arthur in mind. 'Tis the red room I mean, and no other. It's just a notion of me own I have that I'll advertise in the newspapers for company. Isn't that a

great notion now, Barbara?"

Miss Nugent looked at her brother, open-eyed. without answering him. For days past she had been anxiously revolving in her mind such cases as she could recall of persons whose sudden accession to unexpected riches had unsettled their mental equilibrium. Then a solution occurred to her which made her sit up stiffly. and stiffly inquire, "If it's a wife you're wanting, Anthony, why don't you be plain about it?"

Anthony looked at Lady Kitty, and Lady Kitty looked at both of them; and Anthony and Lady Kitty

laughed in chorus at Miss Nugent.

"Faith, no! I'd no scheme that way; but ye have given me an idee-a. Barbara, and I'll turn it over

by-and-by."

"Indeed, yes; do so," said Miss Nugent. "I'm not the kind of person to be useful here any longer, I think. 'Tis well I have me own little money in the bank at Dublin; though it's thankful I am to think that the same little money was a power of help to us both, Anthony, in the times that you don't remember."

"Ah, now, Barbara, me dear, don't talk that way. Who would remember those days if I didn't? And what gave ye the foolish notion that I'd go marry meself

again? Sure, where would I find your equal?"

"Well, then, what is it ye're talking of?" "'Tis Kitty's notion, and not mine at all," said the

evasive Anthony.

"You said it was your own just now."

"Now, Barbara, listen, and don't run away with impossible notions," said Lady Kitty. "You know he's quite bent on having this what-d've-call-it—this observatory of his; and he can't manage it himself, of course; so I tell him he must advertise in the papers for some-body who understands such things; and I really think, Barbara, it would be much better to have a nice, quiet, clever sort of girl than a man, who would perhaps bother Mr. Nugent with things he didn't want to learn, and mightn't be able to learn at all, and——"

And steal me opinions. Don't forget that he might steal me opinions. That's what I'm afraid of. I

wouldn't put up with that at all."

"But doesn't it appear to either of ye," said Miss Nugent, "that this is a queer sort of a place to be bringing a stranger like that into? Kitty, I wonder at

you to be putting such notions into his head."

"Queer?" said Anthony. "And where's the queerness of it? Don't we feed like other people—and byand-by won't we be feeding better nor most? Haven't
we beds to sleep in—and by-and-by won't we be treading
on carpets a foot thick or more? Isn't there a cellar
below that's——"

"A foot under water this minute," said Miss Nugent. "But don't say I'm standing in your way, Anthony; and, for the matter of that, you'd be like no Nugent that ever was if you weren't busy with some new-fangled thing, having a mint of money at your call."

"That's me good Barbara! me fine Barbara!" replied Anthony, as Miss Nugent put her pruning scissors in a

basket and went off to the garden.

"And now, me Lady Kitty; me clever, ingenious, bold, redoubtable girl, sit down here and make me a cunning little trap of an advertisement that'll catch me the bird I must have."

"No, I don't think I'll have anything more to say to you. Remember the shocking things you've been saying about Arthur. Besides, even if you catch your bird, I don't believe Barbara will allow you to cage her here."

"Oh, but she will, she will now, Kitty. Didn't you hear the sentiment she went out with? And think how I'll be setting you up one of these fine days, you and your Arthur."

"I won't be bribed, and I don't believe you'll 'set us

up' at all."

"Oh, but I'm—I'm almost sure I will. I might do it any of these times now. And when I do 'twill be the greatest setting up that ever was. I can see the pair of ye on your way to church now, in a carriage with postillions to the horses, and maybe an outrider or two. Ye shall have a procession just as grand as the judge and sheriffs used to have in the good old days."

"With javelin men and trumpeters?"

"Maybe, maybe. I wouldn't wonder at all."

"Very well; I don't mind so much about the javelin men, but remember the trumpeters. And now, look here; you must write the advertisement in this way."

And Lady Kitty, after a few moments' cogitation, drew up an excellent advertisement of precisely the right sort. But it did not satisfy Anthony, and when her ladyship had gone to the garden to look for Barbara, he drew up another to please himself. By the same day's post he sent the advertisement to the *Irish Times* and the *Times*.

#### CHAPTER V.

#### A LADY READS THE ADVERTISEMENT.

AT about this time an English lady, who might be described with truth as young, interesting and handsome, sat in a small top room in a house near the Rue de l'Opéra, in Paris, counting a pile of napoleons and francs. It was such a scanty pile that she counted it over and over again to try and make it bigger. The reason of her anxiety was that this little heap of gold and silver represented to the handsome young lady her whole pecuniary fortune; and while she counted it she was asking herself what she must do when the store should be exhausted. Having quite satisfied herself that there were no more coins in the heap than she had

numbered at the first reckoning, she got up and began to pace the room, taking mental stock as she did so cf

everything that it contained.

But everything, or nearly everything, belonged to the French landlady, for the room was a hired one. The young lodger's chattels were chiefly personal ornaments and articles of the toilet; but these, though not numerous, were a good deal better in quality than one might have expected to find in the possession of a top-storey tenant. Noticeably, there were hairbrushes whose ebony backs were inlaid with silver; on the chimney-piece were two scent-bottles with silver tops; and the diminutive and unsteady dressing-table contained two or three small morocco cases, one of which, lying open, discovered a gold bracelet. Amongst two or three dresses hanging on the door was a silk one which looked quite new, and beside it hung a silk-lined cloak which no cheap magasin had turned out. All these things the young lady noted with a careful eye, and it might have been conjectured that she asked herself whether they were not capable of being turned to account for the purpose of swelling the scanty pile of napoleons and francs. From this it may be gathered that the lady was of opinion she had no further need at present of ebony-handled hairbrushes, gold bracelets, or cloaks with silk lining.

She sat down at the table again, pushed away the heap of coins, and began to calculate with pencil and

paper.

She was dressed in black, and that negative colour was relieved only by a small linen collar at the neck, and small linen cuffs at the wrists. Both collar and cuffs were spotlessly white, the black cashmere hung in admirable folds, and fitted perfectly; and the extremely small shoe, which was gently—one might say contemplatively—tapping the floor beneath it, was as neat in outline as it was soft in material.

Poor little widow! Yet, to tell the bare truth, there was not the least air of poverty about her; nor did the expression of her handsome face ask compassion from anybody.

As for her weeds, her looking-glass assured her that they became her well: for she was fair, and was tall, and

straight as a pine-stem.

Having finished her calculation—no, not quite finished it, but she was hungry, and her clock told her that it was ten minutes beyond her usual breakfast-hour; the calculation must wait.

Taking a napoleon from the pile on the table, she locked the rest away, found her hat and gloves, locked the door of her room behind her, went downstairs and into the street.

Five minutes' walking brought her to a nice-looking restaurant, and she went in, and took a seat at a small corner table which seemed to have been kept for her, since the waiter who served it put back the chair when he saw her approaching, and stood beside it till she came up.

The waiter wished the lady good morning, and said she was a little late. The lady replied that she had been bien affairée, and the waiter hoped she had a good appetite. Then he smoothed out the bill of fare, but did not presume to advise the lady upon any of the dishes which it offered, for experience had taught him that the customer was able to make her own selection. The lady chose a breakfast of three delicate courses, and the waiter went to tell the cook that he had better not make any mistake about the dishes.

The lady drew off her gloves, and while waiting for her breakfast asked for a newspaper. The attentive waiter brought her the French journal which she generally read, but this morning she asked for an English one, and a copy of the *Times* was, with some difficulty, found for her. She read it leisurely while eating her breakfast.

For the purposes of the story, and at the risk of shocking the reader's feelings, it is necessary to insert here a brief retrospective note touching the past of the handsome young widow. She had been a widow four months. One night, exactly four months before this date, her husband has been carried home from an upper room in this restaurant, with a mortal wound in his neck, which he

had received in a brawl over a game of cards. It was an affair which might have caused, and which ought to have caused, a considerable public scandal; but several of the persons concerned in it were rich and influential young men, they were good customers of the restaurant, the restaurant had a very respectable record, nothing of the sort had ever happened there before, and it was all kept profoundly secret. The victim of the gamblers' quarrel was an Englishman, young and clever; a surgeon by profession and a gambler and roue by choice; with a few thousand pounds of ready money he had come to Paris ostensibly to study in the hospitals; in reality (knowing his health to be ruined beyond hope of cure) to scatter the remnant of his fortune in as short a time as possible. He did this in six months. He died on the night that he was carried home from the restaurant, and his history with him; and this is how it came that, four months after his death, his widow was counting the remnant of her fortune, with subjective queries respecting the next, and, as yet, unwritten, chapter in her life.

Her breakfast finished, she turned to the advertisement sheet of the *Times* and glanced from one announcement to another, with more curiosity than her face betrayed. A word that she glimpsed in passing, without having precisely read it, pricked her vision with a sense of familiarity. She looked again, and read at the bottom of an advertisement the words, "Address—CARRICONNA."

With an expression now genuinely puzzled, she read the advertisement itself:

"THE STARS.—An Elderly Gentleman, anxious to benefit his species through study of the Stars, desires the assistance of a Lady of Sound Intellectual Parts, Cheerful and Amenable manners, good Eyesight, and a Reasonable knowledge of the Universe, or Heavens."

Then followed the address, Carriconna, and the name of an Irish post-town.

Observing that the paper was somewhat soiled and crumpled, the lady looked at the date, and saw that it

was three days old.

"Why do you bring me a paper three days old?" she inquired of the polite waiter, who replied that the English journal not being much in demand amongst the customers, and being so very dear, it was bought half-price when aged of three days.

The lady paid her bill and went to a newsagent's, where she purchased a copy of the previous day's Times, it being too early to obtain the issue of the actual day. Returning to her lodging in the street near the Opera, she opened her paper at the advertisement sheet, and saw with a smile that the elderly gentleman still proclaimed himself anxious to benefit his species through the study of the stars.

"It is a crotchet evidently," she said to herself; and added: "A clever woman can always manage a man

with a crotchet."

Presently a thought seemed to leap into her mind which gave a new and exciting interest to her speculations about the advertisement. She got up and walked about the room, as she had done an hour or two earlier, but with much more energy in her movements, and quite a bright tinge of colour in her cheeks.

"It must be that!" she said. "I am quite sure it is. I see just how it has all happened. What an extraordinary thing that I should chance upon this advertisement! Chance? No, it was not chance at all; I am too strong a believer that life has no accidents to admit that.

Well, what shall I do."

She continued going to and fro in the narrow space between the window and the door opposite, until yet

another thought seemed to strike her.

"The stars—the stars—the stars; what is it that the stars remind me of?" she said slowly and reflectively. "I can't rem—oh, yes, I remember now. Well, shall I look at it or not?" A moment's hesitation, and then, decisively, "Of course I shall! It will help to give me my answer."

She took a key out of her purse and unlocked a trunk in a corner of the room. At the bottom of the trunk was an old writing-case of blue morocco leather, out of which, when opened, tumbled a heap of faded letters. These the lady unceremoniously scattered to one side, and, searching a pocket of the case, drew from it a roll of thick paper, which was tied round with a silken string.

"Now," said she, "let us see what my prophet has to

say about this interesting matter."

The odd-looking scroll which the young widow unfolded on the table before her was a horoscope. On the first page was a figure or map of the heavens showing the position of the planets at the hour of her birth. On the pages following were paragraphs written in a stiff cramped hand, and headed with signs and dates. She turned over several pages without so much as a glance at their contents.

"It is more than a year since I looked at it," she said. "Is there any record of the year, I wonder?"

As she said this her eye fell upon a singular figure at the head of a page. It represented an old woman, or Fate, holding in her outstretched hands the severed halves of a thread, which a knife, with a hand holding it, had seemingly just divided. The widow started as she looked at it, for the date beside the figure was very near to that at which her husband had died. The paragraph underneath it ran as follows: "At about this time it is likely that the subject of the horoscope will suffer by the death of a very near friend or relative."

The next figure bore a date six months later. A woman was shown standing in what looked like a subterranean chamber or strong-room. On the floor of the room were a number of bulky sacks, and the woman stood in the midst of them. One of the sacks was open at the mouth and there were coins slipping from it. The paragraph which accompanied the figure was to this effect: "In this year, and probably at this exact period of it, the subject of the horoscope will make a change in her life, which may bring good or evil to her, according

as she is able or unable to resist the influence of the stars."

Without turning to the next page, the young widow shut up the scroll and returned it again to its case.

"Rubbish!" she said. "I don't believe it a bit, but but I will answer the advertisement. I should have done that, I think, in any case. Yes, I am certain I should."

Having read the advertisement carefully through again, she wrote a draft of a letter in pencil, and after weighing every sentence well, she made a fair copy in ink. "Faithfully yours, Dora Lytton." Thus the letter ended, but when the lady had signed her name she looked at it as though she were not quite contented.

"Better so, I fancy," she said, as she folded and

closed the letter.

It was still early in the day. She walked out to post her letter, and then went to the public library, and asked for a good work on astronomy.

# CHAPTER VL

### FURTHER OF THE ADVERTISEMENT.

On her way home in the evening, Dora reduced her capital still further by laying out three francs and a half in the purchase of one of the books she had been studying at the library. This she carried with her to the top storey, that she might spend the evening, as an astronomer should do, in diligent converse with the stars. It will be seen that Dora was already greatly set upon the project with which that singular advertisement in the Times had inspired her. It once occurred to her that in all likelihood she must be one of the last, if not the very last, applicant in the field; for the advertisement was four days old on the day when she answered it, and it must be the sixth before her letter could be in the advertiser's hands. But this did not reduce her hopes, nor cause the smallest abatement of her confidence.

Before going up to her room, she inquired if her landlady, who had started out in the morning on a day's visit to some friends in the suburbs, had returned home. The maid said that madame had returned an hour ago, but had gone out again to do some shopping. The landlady's little girl, who thought Dora was the most beautiful lady in the world, put her curly head out at a door, and said:

"Mais montez, madame, montez! Il y a quelque chose pour vous."

Dora climbed four pairs of narrow and almost perpendicular stairs, and found on her table a huge bunch of country flowers. The landlady had brought them for her from the suburbs.

Despite her youth, her beauty, and her intelligence, Dora had but one intimate in all Paris—her landlady. There was not a lonelier or more cheerless existence than Dora's; and yet in herself she was seldom lonely and never altogether cheerless. Life had an intense relish for her; its very battles animated much more than they depressed her. But she was a good deal of a solitary, by disposition as well as by habit, and the circumstances of her life in Paris had been in no way calculated to develop what social instincts she possessed.

And intimate is perhaps not quite the right word by which to describe Dora's relations with her landlady. That shrewd, economic Frenchwoman, who was very rigid in the matters of rent and extras, was certainly very fond of Dora, and Dora had a tenderness for her. The dreadful event that had widowed the beautiful young wife, her complete isolation from all aid and comfort from the world without, had awakened extraordinary sympathies in the landlady's heart; and Dora had responded as any woman in her position must have done to the kindness, the affection even, that had been outpoured upon her since that time.

Nevertheless, in all that concerned her inner life, Dora had remained, and still remained, a stranger to her affectionate landlady.

Now, the sight of those flowers which the landlady had

brought especially for her (caring, as Dora knew, nothing for such things herself), delighted Dora, as everything beautiful did; and she was touched besides. Madame would not have crossed a path to pick for herself the prettiest flower in France, but she could remember that in the days when Dora had no need to count her francs (those were the days when three rooms were rented instead of one) she had flowers always about her; and it is a good heart that prompts such remembrances.

Dora re-arranged the flowers for the mere pleasure of handling them, and then opened her book and went to

work upon the solar system.

But every now and then, as the scent of the flowers stole upon her, she thought of Madame Danton, the landlady; and at length she shut up the book, and said: "I think I'll talk to madame."

The truth is, the uncommunicative widow was at last longing to be communicative. Her excitement of mind, a most unwonted state with her, tormented her beyond endurance. She must unbosom herself to somebody, and Madame Danton was her only possible confidante.

Once resolved, she must act immediately. She got up to ring her bell, but remembered that the otherwise obliging *femme de chambre* was rather apt not to hear the top-floor bell, since it was quite a journey upstairs to answer it.

She went half-way down the stairs, and called out, "Louise, has Madame Danton yet returned?"

The voice, not of Louise, but of madame herself, called out in reply:

"But yes, my little, I am of return this moment."

"Bon! Dear madame, be so complaisante as to come and see me a little moment. I have something which I must say to you. Or if you prefer, I will go down to you."

"But no, dear Madame Leetton, I will mount, of all

my heart."

And at once the stairs might be heard complaining under the solid weight of Madame Danton, a large, stout, rosy-faced person, but of ample breath.

"First, thank you for the beautiful flowers, madame. It was so kind of you," said Dora, in French, when the landlady had seated herself on Dora's bed. "And now for what I want to say to you. Madame, I think that perhaps I shall be leaving you. Very soon, perhaps."

"You make me quite sad," replied Madame Danton.
"But—but it is not strange. I never supposed that madame would live here always. This place is not enough good for madame, who is so young and beautiful. Always I have said to myself, 'She is here, but she will not rest here. She is for a great career.' Voilà!"

Dora laughed a little bitterly.

"No, madame," she said. "Indeed, I am not thinking of 'a great career.' But you know how poor I am since my husband's death; and, of course, every day that I sit here idle I become poorer. Only this morning I was counting my little store, and I find that I have enough to live upon for about one month; not enough for two months, at all events. Besides my money, I have a few small things which I could sell, but the money I should get for them would soon go too. Madame, I have reaped the fruit of my own foolishness. I do not complain; but I have come now to the pass to which foolish people come sooner or later, and I have got to face the future as best I may."

Dora had never before spoken to her landlady in this way; and that lady's inquisitiveness asserting itself for a moment over her good nature, she sat up on Dora's bed—sympathetic, indeed, but open-eared for revelations.

"You were with me, madame," Dora went on, "when my husband died. You know how he died, and you can understand that the circumstances of his death, and the history belonging to it, have made it more difficult for me to help myself since then.

"I married my husband against my father's will. I had no mother, and I can hardly say that my father took her place, for I must always obey him without reasoning or answer. He said that I was marrying a villain. I told him that, villain or not, I would marry the man I loved. I married him; not wisely, as I soon learned,

but I loved him little less for that. When I left our home, which was a long way from here, mon amie, in Australia, my father said that he would never see me again. I knew no other relatives, and I had no friends. My husband brought me to Europe. How we lived I hardly know, and do not much care to ask myself now. But I had whatever I wanted, and my husband, though he had deceived me, was never less than good to me. I need not tell you of his death. Shortly before that my father died. He had a great fortune, but I was not to share it. I did not know to whom he left it; I knew only that everything was willed away from me."

"Mais, what horror! What wickedness!" exclaimed

Madame Danton.

"My father had not forgiven me; that was all," answered Dora.

"And madame does not even know to whom all this so great belonging was left?"

"I did not know until this morning," said Dora;

"but—I know now!"

"Ah-h-h! Madame did not know until this morning, but she knows now! Oh, the beautiful mystery!"

"Wait," said Dora. "I will read something to you." And she proceeded to read the astronomical advertisement in the *Times*.

"Eh bien!" said Madame Danton, greatly excited; "but what is this? and who is he, then, this rather old gentleman?"

"It is he who has the money. It is my uncle,"

answered Dora.

"Marvellous! But how does madame know all this?"

"Quite well. You see the address that is given; that is the place where my uncle lives in Ireland. He was my father's only brother, and they were very fond of each other. My uncle and his sister, my aunt, who lives with him at this place in Ireland, were the only persons to whom my father used to write. The person who put this droll advertisement in the journal is quite evidently a person of some means. He has a whim, and is able to

gratify it. Now I know that my uncle in Ireland was always poor; he could not be thinking of amusing himself in this way unless money more than his own had come to him from somewhere. He has received my father's fortune."

"But I think it is *shocking* that he should take it all from you, madame. He cannot be a good Christian, this rather old uncle. No, indeed! I say it."

"Dear madame, my uncle knows nothing about me. He never saw me, and it is probably many years since he even heard of me. I am dead to my family."

"Ah, sad, sad! Well, then, what will madame do?"
"I think, nevertheless," said Dora quietly, "that the

money belongs to me."

"Mais certaine-ment/" madame replied emphatically, with gusto, and an evident relish of the situation.

"Very well," went on Dora. "I have to-day written an answer to the advertisement in the newspaper, and have posted it to my uncle. I shall go there, keeping my secret to myself, and shall get my own again!"

"Oh, how strong a spirit! Excellent!" cried Madame Danton. "But how, my dear lady, will you

do this?"

"I do not know," said Dora. "But I shall do it."

Madame Danton, to whom this scheme presented itself in the light of romance, reflected an instant, and then remarked, with a shade of disappointment in her voice:

"But suppose you should not be the first. Some one else may have been before you. It is a long way from

here to Ireland."

"This paper is only of yesterday's date," replied Dora. "But more than that, I feel sure that this will happen exactly as I have planned it in my mind. I have answered the advertisement; my application will be accepted; I shall go there and get back my own again."

Now we may follow the letter of the pretty schemer to its destination.

It is an inadequate way of describing Anthony's state of mind to say that he was dumbfoundered by the number and variety of the answers which were showered on him through the post. He was regularly bombarded with applications from all parts of the kingdom, the bombardment commencing on the very morning after the advertisement had first showed itself in the two journals named. On the second morning the postboy sought out John Maher in the yard, and threw out a suggestion that "the masther should provide him wud a dunkey, so he should, for the post was niver thrayted this way before, an' his back was fairly broke under the load."

It was just the kind of advertisement to bring in a shoal of begging letters in disguise, and before Anthony had got through the first half hundred he was as much disgusted as bewildered, and said he thought the world at large had turned pauper to spite him.

On the third day, after opening some half-dozen letters which lay on the top of the pile, he swept the remainder of a hundred or so into the turf-bucket, and told Kate Quinn she might stitch them into a petticoat.

"And how long is this to last?" inquired Barbara.
"Troth, I'll put an end to it at once!" said Anthony, and dispatched telegrams to his newspapers, to have the

advertisement withdrawn.

On the fourth day the bombardment slackened, and on the fifth day not a shot was fired. Not a single letter did the fifth day's post convey. Anthony's mind was relieved, but the real business was not yet begun, for he had not made choice of an assistant. Failing the help of Kitty, whose counsel and guidance he had rel'ed upon, but who had not been at Carriconna since we last saw her, Anthony had to confess himself beaten.

But Kitty came at last. She generally rode her pony every morning after an early breakfast, and on the sixth day she arrived at Carriconna just after the second post,

at about half-past ten a.m.

Anthony was at the hall-door, with an unopened letter in his hand.

"Well," said Lady Kitty, "have you had any answers?"

"I did," said Anthony; "I got a few. I think there's not a pairson in the three kingdoms but wants to benefit his species through the study of the stars."

"And have you got your assistant? Has she come?

What is she like?"

"She's anything you could name. I never saw the like of her. She's a widow woman with children to support; and she's a young gyurul fresh from college, where she did credit to herself, and likes nothing so much as the stars; and she's a middle-aged daughter of Minerva, with a notion that the sun is nearly burnt out, and will be stone cold in fifty years; and she's just anything and everything else that fancy likes to paint her; but she didn't come yet, and I don't know how I'll get her at all."

"Oh," said Lady Kitty, "I think it's a great pity you didn't let me choose for you."

"I'm sure of it. But, now, here's another of them, I think."

"That's a foreign letter, isn't it?"

"It is. The postmark on it is Paris. But I don't think I'll open it."

"And why not, pray?"

"'Tis a place I never had a fancy for."
"I didn't know you were ever there."

"I never was. Why would I? Don't I tell ye I've

no fancy for the place?"

"Oh, but that is absurd. Excuse me, but it's the absurdest thing I ever heard. You're going to be a man of science now, and you must view everything and everybody in a calm and unprejudiced spirit. No scientific man has any prejudices. You had better open the letter at once."

"Maybe there'd be better luck in it if you'd open it yourself," said Anthony, handing up the letter to her.

Kitty, who had no reluctance to gratify her curiosity, took the letter from the envelope.

"It's a beautiful handwriting," she said.

"I know," said Anthony, "I know. Print's not equal to it."

Kitty paid no heed, but began to read, pausing every now and then to quiet her pony with little slaps from her gloved hand:

"SIR,—If you have not yet found the help you need, I beg to offer you my services. I am not unacquainted with astronomy; I am cheerful enough to live alone if need be, but to prefer living in company; I am sufficiently amenable to the will of others to be able to earn my bread, and I have never had occasion to find fault with my eyesight. I am twenty-six, and alone in the world. Faithfully yours,—(Mrs.) DORA LYTTON."

".Capital!" said Kitty.

"An elegant letter, I declare," said Anthony, "and 'tis a great point that the poor girl's alone in the world, for ye see she might have whips (heaps) of relations who'd be wanting to benefit their species too if they heard of me little store. Maybe now Paris is not the foolish place one would take it to be."

"Well, she's English herself, evidently," said Kitty.
"I think she's just the sort of girl you want. Barbara!" she called to Miss Nugent, who at that moment emerged from the kitchen-garden, with her old straw hat awry, and the first gathering of early summer peas in her basket, topped with half a dozen great red roses;

"Barbara, have you the red room ready?"
"No, nor begun," said Miss Nugent.

"Well, but come here and read this. We only want your approval to close with the lady at once. That's it, isn't it, Mr. Nugent?"

"That's it itself," assented Anthony.

Miss Nugent read the letter, the tip of her nose elevating itself slightly while she did so.

"H'm! Where are her references?" she asked when

she had finished.

This was a point the others had not thought of.

Anthony, however, was not to be defeated on a mere question of references.

"Don't ye see that she's alone in the world?" said he.
"But she must know somebody," insisted Barbara.

"Yes," said Lady Kitty in support; "and I really think a reference would be advisable."

"There's no telling who or what she may be," said Barbara. "How do we know but she's just a scheming creature with ends of her own to serve? for I will say, Anthony, that that advertisement of yours is nearly the queerest thing ever printed, and no other than a bait to adventurers."

"I've an answer to you there," said Anthony; "for if she was that sort she'd take care to be well set up with references and the like. And if we'd bucketfuls of references with her what better off would we be if we didn't know who wrote them? When ye're at the distance of Paris 'tis as easy forging references as blessing yerself."

This, in its way, was unanswerable. The stars that Anthony was so impatient to learn about, the stars in their courses fought for Dora.

However, after further discussion of the matter, it was decided that Anthony should ask Mrs. Lytton to furnish him with a reference, and he did so by the evening's post.

A very nice note came from Dora, regretting that "her friendless position in Paris did not allow of her sending more than the one reference which she inclosed."

The inclosure was a letter in a bad but ardent English, signed "Félicie Danton." Félicie Danton said that Mrs. Lytton had been for some time a resident in her quiet mansion, giving English lessons to her (Félicie's) little daughter; that she entertained the highest opinion of Mrs. Lytton, and would not endure the thought of parting with so talented and charming a young lady, but for the young lady's own sake, and that she knew Mrs. Lytton to be deserving of a position much superior to her present one.

The reference was pronounced "good," and Dora was to come to Carriconna.

## CHAPTER VIL

#### DOYNE ABBEY.

LADY KITTY was cantering home after helping to resolve the doubtful mind of Anthony. Doyne Abbey, where she lived with her mother, the Dowager Lady Frayne, was not more than an Irish mile and a half from Carriconna; but you could go to or from either place by three different roads, and as the longest of the three was the prettiest, her young ladyship generally chose that one. She had associations with the long road, too, for a grass-grown lane or "boreen" which traversed it at one point had been a trysting-place between a certain pair of lovers.

Crossing this lane, she always thought of Arthur, and her thoughts were doubly with him on this particular morning in early summer, when she remembered that he would soon be home again. There being nobody to overhear her, she said out loud, "I hope he will come before the summer is over;" and she went on, "I suppose I ought to be dreadfully stiff with him now that old Mr. Nugent is a rich man, but that's really too absurd. It's a perfectly sensible thing for people not to marry when they're poor, I've no doubt; but it's equally the height of absurdity to pretend that you don't care for a man when he's rich, whom you loved when he was not I don't think mamma can behave stupidly any longer—I mean wisely—for of course she has been very wise about it all. Barbara will help me, I know; and, as for Mr. Nugent, I don't think he'll care what anybody does, provided he gets his telescope. I loved Arthur very much when he was poor, and I intend to love him twice as much now that his father is rich. And if—oh. who's this?"

She had got beyond the lane, and was entering on the winding road that skirted the ridge of hills which rose up against the south side of the lake. All the country

hereabouts was thick with legends. Over those hills was heard at night the rumbling of the coach with the headless horses. From out of the lake, whose silver borders were just visible at this point, issued on winter evenings the fairy hunt, which some of the peasants declared they had seen—stag, horses and horsemen complete. The bit of road on which the hoofs of Kitty's pony echoed against the hills was the spot where the legendary black dog of Doyne was heard whining after nightfall. The worn and weather-beaten bell-tower of old Doyne Abbey was just visible in the distance through a break in the thick plantation of elm, beech, and ash. Along a bridle-path skirting this break a man was riding towards the cross roads just in front of Kitty. He put his horse into a canter when he saw her.

"It's Mr. Trenchard!" said Kitty. "Is he going to

the Abbey? I'll take him to lunch."

Mr. Trenchard, C.I.R.I.C., County Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary, raised his hat with a smile as he and Kitty met at the cross-roads.

He was, as an officer of that very soldier-like force should be, a man of military air, tall, long-limbed, and vigorously built; close-cropped, with a black moustache, and a dark face, very refined, and very soft and winning.

"Good morning, Lady Kitty. Lovely morning, isn't

it ? "

• "Perfect! You've got a new horse, Mr. Trenchard, haven't you?"

"Yes; got him in Dublin yesterday. Just schooling

him a bit. How do you like him?"
"Oh, think he's a beauty. But his head's rather big,

don't you think?"

"A little too big for looks, perhaps; but awfully clever head."

"Does he fence well?"

"He will do before November. A little green just now, but awfully willing; wants to take them flying. Chaser's blood in him. Are you going home?"

"Yes; won't you come, too, and have some lunch?"

"Thanks, I believe I will. Hungry work, schooling. Lady Frayne well?"

"Yes, thank you. She was saying only this morning

that we hadn't seen you lately."

They were within a quarter of a mile of the Abbey,

and presently rode in at the principal gate.

Doyne Abbey was the dower-house of the Fraynes. This, with the small farm of five hundred acres attached to it, and her jointure, was all that had descended to Lady Frayne on the death of the earl fifteen years before, the estate, which was strictly entailed, having gone to a nephew. And the Abbey was Lady Frayne's for her lifetime only, so she was now saving strenuously for Kitty, and this made her ladyship a pretty hard ruler on her small territory. Ouite resolved that Kitty should not marry unless she married a substantial income, the countess had determinedly opposed any idea of a union between Kitty and Arthur; though, as the two families were on the most intimate and the best of terms, she was quite aware of, and in no way hostile to what she chose to consider as the merely childish understanding that Kitty had with Arthur and Arthur with Kitty. The countess and Anthony, who had a good deal in common, were in perfect accord on the matter.

Doyne Abbey was a small but exquisitely beautiful place. Of the Abbey itself nothing remained but the bell-tower, with its delicate finials, a fragmentary cloister, and three mouldering walls, fretted over with scarcely

legible tracery.

The residence was a small, fine old mansion of reddish-grey sandstone, with those projecting gables which are so beautiful in themselves and so much more beautiful in the play of light and answering shadow which they cause. The windows were of various shapes, and delightful in their variety; bays and oriels, with pleasant seats in them, for bookworms or for sweethearts. The chimney-shafts were carved and twisted, the roof tall, peaked and pointed.

The drive leading from the gate was bordered, close to the house, by thick laurel hedges, on which the countess was fond of exercising her skill with the clippers. She emerged from one of the hedges, clippers in

hand, as the horses come up the gravel.

A little overgrown and unwieldy in this her fifty-fifth year, Lady Frayne was still of an imposing and dignified presence. Very tall, and proportionately stout, she had massive and well-cast features, and her grey eyes were capable of a direct and formidable stare through the tortoise-shell pince-nes which she habitually wore. She dressed with the carelessness which is privileged to an elderly countess who has been a person of high fashion in her day; the chief articles of her out-door costume being a flapping, light-coloured felt hat, with a feather; a large loose jacket, with prodigious side pockets; and a pair of great heel-less boots, with generally a button or two astray.

"Well, you're back," said she to her daughter. "Well, Mr. Trenchard, and how are you? Very glad to see you. The lunch-bell has rung, but that's of no consequence, I suppose; we old people are the only ones with

healthy appetites."

"Ah! wait till you see the Force at work," said

Trenchard, assisting Kitty to dismount.

The dining-room at Doyne looked out upon the pleasure-garden, studded with gorgeous flower beds, for Lady Frayne was a great gardener.

"Did you ride far?" asked Trenchard, when they

were seated at table.

"Only to Carriconna. It's great fun up there just now. Mr. Nugent doesn't know what to do with his money, and he's going to buy a telescope to study the stars."

"You don't say so! Well, that's funny! But if you come to think of it, I suppose one ought to know something about them—the stars, I mean. Why didn't they make us at home in that sort of thing at school? I often try to make out what I did learn at school; never succeed, though."

"But it's the very height of philosophy to learn that you've learnt nothing," said Kitty. "I read that in a

copy-book long ago."

"I'm on the side of philosophy then. And I'm on the side of cold pie, too, only your mamma doesn't choose to recognize that, as she has a theory of her own to keep up about appetites."

"Pass your plate, then, and don't chatter so," said Lady Frayne. "Anthony doing anything stupid, Kitty?"

"Oh, yes, mamma; thanks to me he is breaking out into fresh extravagances every day. You know about that advertisement. Well, there have been simply shoals of answers, *shoals* of them, and to-day there was only one, and we've accepted it, and she's coming, if her references are satisfactory."

"Pardon me, but these are wild and whirling words,' said the inspector. "May I ask what is it that you have accepted, and who She is that is coming if her references

are satisfactory."

"The lady astronomer who is to assist Mr. Nugent to

study the stars."

Trenchard laid down his knife and fork and laughed loudly.

"And have you been putting him up to all this? It's

the best thing I ever heard," he said.

"Has the man positively written to somebody?" asked Lady Frayne.

"Yes, mamma, to a young English widow in Paris, who writes a charming hand, and says she is quite alone in the world."

The countess and the inspector now laughed in chorus, but Kitty maintained her gravity.

"Oh, you'll see!" she said.

"And does the lady state her age? Awfully important point that," said the inspector.

"She says she is twenty-six."
"Capital clever age, twenty-six."

"Well, wait awhile, wait awhile," said Lady Kitty.

"And what about the explorers?" inquired Trenchard presently. "Any news of them?"

"Yes; Mr. Arthur is coming home invalided."

"Ah! I hope not too much invalided. Just in time to share the sw—the spoils."

"And to fall in love with the prodigy from Paris," said Lady Frayne.

"Oh, yes, bound to do that; part of the story."

"Take care now, Mr. Trenchard, that might be your part, you know," said Kitty.

# CHAPTER VIII.

#### CARRICONNA RECEIVES A NEW INMATE.

DESPITE her two nights and a day of travel, Dora looked deliciously fresh in the Irish train that was bearing her across country towards her new home. It is needless to say that she was charmingly dressed, for she was never dressed otherwise; her slight—very slight—widow's weeds were as elegant as they were simple; and, indeed, Madame Danton had thought it a pity, and said so, that they should be wasted on the "uncombed Irish," whom her fancy depicted as "a people tout-à-fait ridiculous."

Dora travelled first-class; she would rather have travelled hungry than without a well-padded cushion at her back, and her survey of the train before it started from Dublin had sufficiently assured her that the second-class carriages were not at all the style of conveyance she had been accustomed to. But she was not travelling hungry because she was travelling first-class. She had provisioned herself, lightly but pleasantly, for the journey; she had lunched, and was in a happy temper.

Mrs. Lytton was a little philosopher in her little way. She had tasted some of the bitters of life, but they had not soured her. Some of us, whose natures expand and grow philanthropic under a kindly sun, corrode or grow acid in the season of adversity. But Dora was not one who cried out upon the world when it showed her an unamiable face. "Your turn to-day, mine to-morrow!" she said to that phantom evil genius whom she lightly reproached for her misfortunes. And the shocks she

had received during her brief, unhappy marriage had done her much more good than harm, for they had taught her that folly, like virtue, has its day of reckoning, and that she who has sown the wind shall reap the whirlwind. Having weathered more storms than one, Dora was not afraid of any wind that blew; and when one storm was passed she was never troubled to forecast the next.

She had burst now upon an unknown sea, and was sailing it deliberately, with no fear of missing her port. Being, indeed, determined to fetch it, she would not have admitted the possibility of a misadventure. She had no notion in her mind, not the most spectral, as to the means by which she would accomplish the scheme she had proposed to herself; but the scheme being built up, she did not doubt her ability to transform the ima-

ginary into the actual.

The train dragged lazily along. There are no expresses in Ireland, as expresses are understood in England, and Dora's train was not even an Irish express. Ireland and Italy (as any one who has travelled in both countries will admit) have many institutions, as well as many features, in common, and the two countries are peculiarly in accord in their notions of railway travelling. No traveller in either country is ever supposed to be in a hurry to reach his destination. The passenger is regarded as a person of leisure, who would as willingly spend an hour or two in a railway cutting as anywhere else, or as a person who selects the railway train as the vehicle most certain to carry him latest to a destination which he would prefer never to reach at all.

And the porters and all the officials on the Irish as on the Italian lines take such a kind, almost affectionate, interest in the first-class passenger. If the porter or porters at every little shanty of a station at which the leisurely train made a leisurely stoppage had been firstcousins to. Dora they could scarcely have shown her more gallant attention; and she liked the roll of the brogue after the crispness, the netteté, of the French

tongue.

In its deliberate progress the train came presently to a junction, and seemed indisposed to go further. Dora got out to stroll on the platform, and mentioning to a porter (who, with some luggage beside him waiting to be labelled, was taking an observation of the sun, with his hands in his pockets) the station she was booked for, asked if the chances were in favour of her reaching it that day.

"Ye must change here, me lady," replied the

porter.

Dora said that she had carefully inquired her route before she left Dublin, and was positively told that she

had not to change there.

"Dobl'n's a quare place, so it is," mused the porter. "I wouldn't think too much of anythin' I'd hear in Dobl'n." And then he called about him three other porters, who were waiting on Providence at a little distance, and the station-master, and slowly put the case to They all assured Dora that no one had ever proposed to go to the station she was booked for without changing at that junction, and their combined arguments induced her to have her luggage taken out of the Directly the train had started she found, on consulting her time-table, that by not following her original directions she would be two hours longer in getting to her journey's end. The station-master, in real distress, offered to call back the train, which was just creeping round a bend about three hundred yards away; but Dora had compassion on the passengers, and would not let him.

She had two hours and a half to wait; but amid new scenes Dora was always patient of delay, and somehow or other she was not unwilling to be tardy in reaching Carriconna. The tedious hours of the journey, alone in the railway carriage, had been favourable to reflection; and, however plucky her spirit, she could not but acknowledge to herself that the engagement she was entered on smacked a good deal of audacity.

I have compared Ireland to Italy. I may compare it also, in one respect, to India. There are parts of India

where the peasants are so polite, that when a question is put to them they will answer it solely with a view to pleasing the questioner. A pedestrian, obviously on his last legs, asks how far it is to the next village. "Sahib." is the answer (the village may be five miles off), "it is round the next corner." But if the sahib be walking with a pretty lady, whose company is evidently pleasant to him, the answer will probably be (though the village may be within bowshot), "Sahib, you have at least ten miles to go." Dora, who began to be anxious for afternoon tea, inquired if there were an hotel in the town. Her porter, who saw that she had got out of a first-class carriage, perjured himself to the extent of an assurance that the hostelry in the town was the only one worthy its name in the county. Following his directions, Dora chanced on an inadequate inn, with pink walls and a pale green door, managed by a neuralgic landlady, who said she might have tea and a boiled egg for sixpence in the general room, with two jockeys and a herd, or for a shilling in a private apartment. While tea was preparing she walked through the pretty and dirty little town, with its stone bridge, which Cromwell had built, its disreputable courthouse in the centre of the square, its oddities of colour and irregularities of line—in Italy once more.

She was back for the train a quarter of an hour before it was timed to start, but there were no signs of readiness. Half an hour later, four or five unsteady carriages were made fast to an unsound engine; the unemployed of the neighbourhood, including, as it appeared, the chief part of the population, assembled on the platform to assist Dora and her baggage into the least unsafe of the compartments; the driver extracted a whistle from the engine, and the catafalque on wheels set out. Ten minutes later it withdrew into a cutting, the main line being occupied by a series of baggage trucks, with which a guard and a porter were playing a popular national game. The guard standing some distance down the line, called to the porter: "Send her along." The trucks then moved in the direction of the guard, and when they had reached him, the porter, standing behind, cried, "Send her back;" and the trucks returned to him. This pastime went on for a quarter of an hour, after which Dora's train was allowed to resume its course. It set Dora down at her station three hours and a quarter later than the official time.

John Maher was waiting for her with the horse Gehazi—a name which the local speech (directing itself to the veracities of things) had not inaptly corrupted into "Go Aisy."

"I am so sorry," said Dora. "You must have been waiting for me half the day. And the poor horse, I

hope he has not been standing all this while."

"Don't be throublin' yersel' about the horse, miss," said John, a dark, stalwart man, with a face more than ordinarily intelligent (he could neither write nor spell his name); "he's joost the greatest horse at standin' in the counthry. There's no batin' him at it. He's the skilfullest horse to stand I iver come acrass. An' 'tis glad I am to see ye, miss, for I'm sure ye're downright bate wud thravellin'; and thim Irish trains—well, I'll say no more, but just fix yersel' up there, miss, an' I'll have ye home in no time.

"You are very kind, but I'm really not tired at all.

What is your name, please?"

"'Tis John, miss, axin' yer lave; an' I'm up there at the great house since a boy. I didn't git me new coot yet, miss, but 'tis comin', and silver-plate buttons frum me throat to me hales. Get up, now, miss, and don't be worritin' about yer luggige, for I'll see 'tis all brought down. Oh! but 'tis yersel' has the swate face, an' I'm tould—more power to ye!—that ye have the blessed heav'ns aff by heart like a book."

Dora's luggage being safely bestowed behind, and Gehazi having been induced to show his paces, they were presently well forward on their nine-miles' drive to Carriconna.

Dora's heart began to give a little, despite her efforts to stay it.

John Maher, bent on improving his acquaintance, made every changing feature of the landscape serve his turn. Not a house, hillock, or hayrick on the road but he turned to conversational account

"Ye see that empty cabin there beyant, miss; 'twas Iim O'Shea's."

Then he would pause for a sympathetic question.

"No, he's not there now, miss. Jim's dead this good while."

Another question.

"Well, miss, 'tis this way: they hanged him."

Another question.

"'Pon me honour, miss, I couldn't tell ye why. An', to spake in fairity, I think there's no one knows. But there was a murdher done hereabouts, an' some o' the bhoys was took, an' Jim O'Shea was one o' them, an' they hanged him. That's all any one iver knew about it, miss, exceptin' this—that Jim O'Shea was five mile away, sellin' bastes, the day the murder was done. But 'tis a great thing to hang some one when there's murdher done. Take a good hould o' the sate, miss, for we've a nate corner to turn here, an' Miss Barbara was spilt onct at this same spot."

The long, winding road was hilly and desolate. Except some little peasants' carts, mostly laden with turf, and drawn by a mule or donkey, they encountered almost no traffic whatever. There were cabins here and there, at pretty frequent intervals, and occasionally one of those small stone houses which are beginning to replace the cabins in many parts of the country. At intervals much less frequent a glimpse was obtained of larger and more pretentious habitations. Two policemen, patrolling in company, in their dark, semi-military uniforms, and bayonets in their belts, nodded to John Maher as they passed.

The evening was soft and fresh; a shower had fallen, and the earth and leaves smelled strong and sweet, their fragrance mixing with the pungent, pleasant odour of the turf smoke from the cabins.

Dora was in no hury for the drive to be over, but the road at length entered between two stretches of poor looking bog, the turf on which, piled in long, low stacks or clamps, was of the light-coloured inferior quality; and John Maher, extending his whip over this uninviting landscape, said, with an air of semi-proprietorship," "We're on the masther's land now, miss!"

"Is the house near?" asked Dora.

"We'll be wheelin' in at the gran' gate in a few minutes, miss."

Another dip in the steep road and another sharp corner, and then there came into view, a few hundred yards ahead, the cracked stone pillars of the "gran' gate"—a rusty iron structure which was the "grand" or principal entrance to Carriconna.

Dora's heart was full of strange emotions as those few hundred yards were being traversed; she scarcely heard John Maher's extravagant descriptions of the schemes his master had in mind to restore the ancient glories of

the family dwelling of the Nugents.

Then they turned in at the gate, which always stood wide open, and the horse was made to put his best leg forward up the drive.

One glimpse of the house and the neglected pleasure grounds, divided by a sunk fence, and wire railing patched in places, from a meadow of standing grass, told much of the fallen fortunes of this generation of the Nugents.

The last glow of the setting sun lit up the faded walls, discoloured, and with here and there a gaping chink which might have alarmed the tenant of a modern house, but which in a solid old building like Carriconna was probably not of much consequence. The high, gorsegrown hill known as the "black hill" rose up behind and a little to the right of the house, and down away to the left was just visible, where the sun touched it, a silver curve of the lake.

At a window which opened nearly to the ground, in full view of the drive, sat Barbara, on the old cushioned window seat, intent upon getting the last of the daylight for her task of darning the table-linen, which, it may be noted, Anthony had not yet found time to replace. She looked up through her spectacles as the wheels came near, and rose in her black silk flounced gown, drawing

the light shawl of China crêpe which lay over her shoulders more closely about her as she laid down her

work and hastened out to the front door.

"Anthony," she called, "Anthony. Well, Mrs. Lytton, you have come at last, and, indeed, I am sure you're just as tired as tired can be. Oh! but that's a terrible long journey you've had, travelling these two days and nights all the way from Paris."

Barbara was not even in pretended sympathy with the project of her brother which had brought this pretty stranger to Carriconna. But that overflowing sense of hospitality, which is a second nature to the Irish, was not to be repressed in her, and there was nothing lacking in her reception of Dora. "Anthony!" she called again.

But the ponderous step of that would-be-astronomer was now behind her, and Dora beheld the gaunt form of her uncle towering above his sister in the door-

wav.

To Dora, at all events, this was a very strange meeting. Her foot was on the threshold of her father's old home; her father's brother and her father's sister were welcoming her to that home—but as a stranger.

If Dora's nature had not been a strong one she must have shed some tears, and, indeed, the muscles of her throat contracted a little as she thanked her aunt and

uncle for their generous greeting.

"And to think," said Anthony, "that ye've come all this way to us. D'ye know, now, Mrs. Lytton, Paris is a place I never had any opinion of at all, but see how wrong I was! Though, ye know, ye're not French yourself. And wouldn't ye think now, Barbara, to look at her, she had good Irish blood in her? Barbara, did ye introduce yourself, my dear? This is me sister, Miss Nugent, Mrs. Lytton. John Maher, put down those things here and take away the horse. The supper's just waitin' for ye, Mrs. Lytton, and I hope ye're famished."

"She has a right to be; but will ye not give her leave first to go upstairs and arrange herself?—though doesn't she look as if she'd done that this minute? And, oh! but, Anthony, will you look at the lovely style of her! Was it in Paris, now, ye had this made?" And Miss Nugent laid an admiring touch on the sleeve of Dora's long, silver-grey travelling coat.

"Yes, in Paris," said Dora, who as yet had scarcely had an opportunity of opening her lips. "You are both very kind. I am really not so tired; travelling agrees very well with me; but if I may go upstairs for a

minute---"

"I'll take ye myself," said Miss Nugent. "Anthony, like a good man, will ye see that Kate doesn't bring in the fowls and the fry till they're wanted? She's hovering below there with dishes and the like this hour past."

"I really ought to have been here three hours ago, I think," said Dora. "But the railway people made me change at some junction, where I was kept waiting all

the afternoon."

"Oh! I know them, I know them, the craytures!" exclaimed Anthony. "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if I built a quiet little line of me own, from this to Dublin, one o' these days. It's a notion I have."

"Oh! indeed, it's queer notions ye'll hear in this place,

Mrs. Lytton, I can assure——"

"Will I bring in the supper, miss?" inquired Kate Quinn, whom John Maher's eulogistic description of Dora had filled with a burning curiosity to see her.

"Is it now?" said Miss Nugent. "No, to be sure ye won't. Don't you see that Mrs. Lytton didn't change her gown yet? Will ye come with me, Mrs. Lytton?"

Barbara led her across the low wide hall, almost bare of ornament, and up the wide heavy stairs to her room on the first floor. The window, shaded by curtains of old blue chintz, was open, and the night air blew in cool and sweet from the lake.

"Oh! how lovely," exclaimed Dora. "What a great lake! It is as good as living by the sea. And a ruin too! What a beautiful old tower!"

"Ah! ye'll know more of that very soon," said Miss

Nugent. "That's where me brother's going to put up his grand telescope that you've come to help him with."

"Oh, indeed! Mr. Nugent is quite an ardent astronomer, I suppose, at least I should imagine so from his advertisement in the newspaper."

This was Dora's first feeler.

"Ardent, is it?" laughed Barbara. "Well, then, me dear Mrs. Lytton, I tell ye that ye'll have to teach him the very A B C of it. I don't suppose now that Anthony ever looked through a telescope in his life."

"Capital!" thought Dora. "But very much the case

I suppose it to be."

"Oh, how curious," she said to Barbara. "Then Mr.

Nugent wants to-to-"

"My dear," said Miss Nugent, "I don't quite know what he wants, and I'm doubtful if he knows himself. But between ye I hope ye'll arrive at something. Now if there's anything you want don't think twice about asking for it. Dear! but you're young to be a widow, and to have lived alone by yourself in Paris there," and without waiting for Dora's reply, Miss Nugent smiled kindly on her and left her. She popped in again to say, "Come down as soon as you're ready."

"Was anybody ever in a stranger situation?" thought Dora. "If they only knew me! They used to say in Australia that I was like my father. Have my aunt and uncle thought that, I wonder? This room might have been his. He must have sat out under those trees, and climbed that tower, and rowed upon the lake there. But there was a son, my cousin, where is he? And my uncle knows nothing of astronomy, and I am here to teach him! I was half inclined to cry a little while ago, but really it is all very funny. This room would make four of Madame Danton's. I wonder how old the furniture is? And they've put me a new wicker chair; papa's money bought that, I suppose. And a brand new chart of the heavens over the chimneypiece, I declare. That was very thoughtful of Uncle Anthony."

Meanwhile she was making a rapid toilette, and that

finished she groped her way down the dark staircase to the hall.

"We're in here, Mrs. Lytton," called her aunt, and Dora found her way into the dining-room.

A rather serious shock awaited her here. The first object her eye fell upon on entering the room, was a picture of her father, an old coloured photograph in a gilt-edged morocco case, which stood open on the mantelpiece. It was unmistakably her father, though the features were younger than Dora remembered them.

Kedagh had had the picture taken in Dublin the day before he sailed for Australia; and for all Anthony's old bitterness against his brother, he had never let this picture from his sight.

Dora's memory of her father was not a sentimental one—perhaps it hardly could have been such—but her heart tightened a little as her eye fell upon his portrait, and she hoped that her cheeks bore no witness to her feelings.

Beside her father's picture was one of a handsome and vigorous young man, whom she at once guessed to be her cousin.

The dining-room was dimly lighted by candles placed in an old silver candelabra on the centre of the table, at which Anthony and his sister occupied their usual positions. The supper itself was a mere oasis amid a desert of table-cloth, but that was only because the table was so big.

Miss Nugent had her urn before her, and Anthony was entrenched behind the very Irish dish of boiled fowl, flanked by another dish of what Miss Nugent had called "fry," and what is otherwise known as eggs and bacon. The turf fire, which had probably been lighted chiefly with a view to decoration, gave the great dreary room an almost comfortable air.

"And is this your first visit to Ireland, Mrs. Lytton?" asked Anthony.

"Yes," said Dora. "I have smelt turf and heard the brogue for the first time to-day."

"Were you long in Paris?" asked Miss Nugent.

"Some little time. I went there with my husband, but since his death I have always wanted to get away from it."

This Dora said in a tone which suggested that the subject thus opened was one she did not care to pursue, and Anthony and Barbara waited for another cue from her.

The telescope seemed a safe topic.

"And what kind of a telescope are you proposing to get, Mr. Nugent? What diameter, for instance?"

"I've been thinking," said Anthony gravely, "that that's a matter 'll want some nice consideration. What's

your own opinion now, Mrs. Lytton?"

Happily for her astronomical reputation, Dora had kept her business well in mind while journeying from Paris, and on her way through London had spent an hour at a first-rate instrument-maker's, where her acquisitive mind had primed itself to some purpose. She said:

"I was not quite sure from your advertisement whether you had built your observatory or were about to build it. I called at an instrument-maker's in London and brought away a catalogue."

"Did ye now?" said Anthony delightedly. "'Twas, I do assure ye, the best thing ye could have done. For

I haven't me telescope yet, and——"

"And you were just waiting for counsel, in fact," said Barbara. "Mrs. Lytton has her plate empty, Anthony."

"Ah! ye may put it that way if ye like," said Anthony. "I'm not one to be too hurried in me movements in matters I'm not pairfect in. If 'twas beasts I'd been wantin' to buy, I'd not have asked a word of help from a soul in Ireland. But me acquaintance with telescopes, ye see, Mrs. Lytton, isn't as full yet as I hope it will be."

"We shall get all the help we want from my catalogue, I'm sure." said Dora.

"You and your catalogue together," said Anthony, "will beat the Royal Irish Observatory."

"And if Mrs. Lytton will eat no more," said Barbara,

"she'll be better able to beat it if ye'll wish her good-

night and let her go to bed."

But Dora pleaded for five minutes' stroll on the terrace, where the air blew up from the lake and made a pleasant rustle amid the branches of the trees. The old tower was just visible in the still shimmering light of the summer eve. The comedy and pathos of the situation were equally strong in Dora's mind; she did not know whether to laugh at the curious old man, her uncle, beside her, or to weep over the wilful past which was responsible for bringing her, a disingenuous stranger, to her father's home.

## CHAPTER IX.

#### BARBARA FINDS AN ALLY.

ANTHONY and Barbara were first at the breakfast-table on the following morning. Dora was a brisk riser in general, but she had lain awake through more than half the night thinking, wondering, making afresh and unmaking her impossible projects; and her sleep, when it came at last, had been dreamful and disquieting. She was not awake when Kate had called her.

"Well," said Anthony, "and how d'ye like me astro-

nomer from Paris?"

"I haven't had her out of me mind since I said goodnight to her," said Barbara. "Anthony, I wonder whether ye'll laugh at me, but time after time last night, when she was talking, I thought I was listening to the voice of Kedagh. And ye may laugh or not, Anthony, but I declare she has a look of him."

"Faith, I'm with ye there!" said Anthony; "the very same thought was with meself. And did ye mind the way she rubbed her ear with her forefinger, just as Kedagh used to be doing?"

"Well, I'm glad she puts us in mind of him. I won't feel so strange with her. 'Tis as if we were bringing

home to us some one that had belonged to Kedagh to share Kedagh's money."

"What became of Kedagh's Bessie, I wonder?"

"I wonder," said Miss Nugent. "It could scarcely have been that he left his own daughter no share at all."

"It wouldn't have been right," said Anthony.

"No, nor right of us to take it all to ourselves if we knew that she were alive."

"No, that wouldn't be right either," said Anthony. "I think it's more likely than anything else that she's dead."

"I think that, if so, Kedagh must have told us," said Barbara.

"I don't know whether he would," said Anthony; "we were three or four years hearing of his wife's death.

Dora's step upon the stairs broke in upon this sentence.

Dora's thoughts had been busy while she was dressing. Though she had slept but poorly, the summer morn invigorated her. And after her bath and a draught of air from the lake, she was as much refreshed as though she had slept the sleep of a babe. She was in excellent spirits, too; her adventure and its success up to this point delighted her. The course seemed to open out fair and smooth before her. She had been kindly received, and her new employers were, she thought, persons who might be humoured to any extent. But she did not for a moment lose sight of the end, however remote and shadowy it then seemed, which she had proposed to herself. She had not come to Carriconna to settle down for life as secretary, amanuensis, or astronomical assistant on a small salary, paid out of that fortune of her father, of which she was firmly persuaded that she had been wrongfully dispossessed.

The soi-disant astronomer, her uncle (she was rather afraid lest in some unguarded moment she should give him that title), was, as she had imagined him, an infinitely crotchety old gentleman, whose head had been completely turned by his new-gotten riches. People of this sort, however, are always awkward to deal with when one's object in dealing with them is a predatory one; and this Dora had wit, or experience, enough to know.

Her method of procedure with him must be a cautious one. Miss Barbara, as she gathered, was to some extent a restraining influence, though weak at that, upon her brother, whose present impulses were all in the direction of spending.

Now, would it be to Dora's interest to help her uncle to scatter his money with unrestrained freedom? Clearly not; if Miss Nugent were on the side of prudent

economy, that, certainly, must be Dora's side too.

She was puzzled about the handsome cousin. Where was he, and what would be his part in the romance? Other devices failing, what simpler or pleasanter one than to entangle the cousin himself in her web, and thus

along with the fortune secure a husband too?

As she finished dressing the question came into her mind, was it really possible that Anthony and Miss Nugent should know nothing whatever about their niece? They could scarcely, she thought, have been told that she was dead; though her whereabouts, after she had quitted her Australian home, could not have been known to them, since they had never been known even to her Indeed her father's death was made known to her only through the medium of the Australian papers. which had been regularly received by her husband. She thought it even possible that her father might have described her to his brother as dead, since he had told Dora herself that she was dead to him. If not, if they had not had some such intimation as this, had they no curiosity about their niece and her fortunes? Dora's own identity with the Bessie Nugent of whom her aunt and uncle must occasionally have heard, in days gone by, was very little likely to be discovered. Dora (her second name at baptism) was the name by which her husband had always called her.

"We didn't begin yet," said Anthony, when Dora

made her appearance in the dining-room.

"You really should have allowed me to send your

breakfast upstairs," said Barbara. "You can't be rested yet, after two sea voyages and two days in the train."

"Well, I declare she hides her fatigue in the most elegant way," said Anthony, in whom this courtly

employment of the tongue was unwonted.

But there was excuse for it. Dora's brightness made the great dingy room show dingier than ever; that fresh young beauty of hers seemed to assert its need of a more gracious setting.

"Have ye the catalogue with ye?" asked Anthony.

"Here it is," said Dora, producing the catalogue from her pocket.

"Capital! We may go to work upon it this very

morning."

"But before ye do anything else," said Miss Nugent, "I hope ye'll get Mrs. Lytton to give a good look at the tower, for I'd like to have her opinion whether it's fit for this work. And I think, Anthony, you should put it plainly before Mrs. Lytton whether she's willing to risk limb and life for your scheme or not. For I'm sure it will be an hourly peril to both of ye, to be sitting up there with your telescopes."

"The tower looks solid enough from here, at any rate," said Dora. "I should think it would support a

weightier telescope than we shall be likely to want."

"Ay, and wait till I take you to the top of it," put in Anthony eagerly. "If there was space enough a regiment might dance on the floor, for the thickness of it. The moment ye've finished I'll take ye to the top."

"Ah! now, don't be hurrying her. Sure, ye didn't get eggs like these in Paris, Mrs. Lytton; they re poached in milk. Won't ye take another of them?"

"They are the best eggs, and the best cooked, I ever tasted," said Dora, who on subjects connected with the table always spoke from her heart.

Anthony excused himself and rose from the table.

"My dear," said Barbara, "take your time. He has his boots to get, and the maids to lecture, and the groom to scold; he'll not be ready for you this half-bour."

So Dora went on with her breakfast, regretting only that the absurdly early hour of nine prevented her from playing as good a part as usual at a meal she was

especially fond of.

"You must humour my brother, Mrs. Lytton," began Barbara, when the door had closed on Anthony. "He's not quite himself these times. 'Tis but a moment almost since he became master of a fortune that neither

of us ever dreamed of having."

Dora wished that her aunt would not begin an interesting conversation before she had done the justice she was anxious to do to the eggs poached in milk. But even the eggs were forgotten at this moment. She said nothing to check Miss Nugent's evident desire to enter on a confidential discourse. The subject broached had, of course, an absorbing interest for Dora; she only hoped that she might be kept from betraying her own familiarity with it.

"It was left by a brother in Australia who died a short

time ago," continued Miss Nugent.

"Had he no family?" said Dora.

"He died a widower," said Miss Nugent, "and, we tnink, childless. We know very little of his family life, which did not begin until after he had settled himself in Australia. He had a daughter, but I'm afraid she was not much good to him, and we can't but think that she died before her father, for he left his whole fortune to my brother. Latterly he scarcely wrote at all, and his letters, when they did come, never told us much."

"And Mr. Nugent, has he no children?" asked Dora quietly, quite willing for the present to acquiesce in her

own demise.

"My brother Anthony is a widower too," said Barbara, "but he has a son. Isn't that a fine handsome fellow you see up there on the chimneypiece? That's our boy Arthur."

"A son to be proud of," said Dora.

"You may say that, indeed!" chimed Barbara. "I am as proud of him myself as if he were a son of mine."

"He is not with you at present?"

"No, but I'm delighted to think that he will be soon He went away from us with our neighbour, Lord Kilcreevy, to take part in an exploring expedition in Africa. His health has given way, and he is coming back now. He may be home any time."

"And the portrait beside Mr. Arthur's?" asked Dora.
"That is my brother Kedagh's—he who left us the

fortune."

Barbara found it pleasant to have secured a new and interested listener. The poor lady's life during the past three months or so had been a series of excitements, anxieties, upsets, and quite unwonted changes, subjective as well as objective. She had dreaded Dora as likely to be the most disturbing change of all, and could hardly understand the happiness she found in being able, within a few hours of their acquaintance, to talk to Dora scarcely less intimately than she talked to Kitty.

"What in the world put it into Anthony's head that he must turn astronomer I don't for the life of me know," she went on. "My dear Mrs. Lytton, the Nugents are a very queer people, and when they've money in their pockets there's no knowing what they

will or what they won't do with it."

"Mr. Nugent seems rather anxious to make a large

use of his money, at all events," said Dora.

"That's the very thing," said Barbara. "He'll be making too large a use of it if there's no one to hold him back; and to hold a Nugent back when he has money to get rid of is about the same as trying to put the willingness of a dog into a mule."

"I suppose Mr. Nugent knows," said Dora, "that

astronomy is a rather expensive amusement."

"'Deed he doesn't!" said Barbara emphatically. "And, me dear Mrs. Lytton, I'd like ye just quietly to try and put that notion into his head."

Barbara was already persuaded that Dora would prove

not an enemy, but an ally.

## CHAPTER X.

#### A HAT FROM PARIS.

This conversation, which had gone far enough to produce at all events the germ of an understanding between Dora and Miss Nugent, went no further; for Anthony's voice was heard on the terrace hailing an early visitor, and Lady Kitty brought her pony to a standstill outside the dining-room window.

"Oh, here's Lady Kitty!" said Barbara. you. Kitty? Come in here and let me introduce you to Mrs. Lytton. Kitty's a neighbour of ours," she explained to Dora. "Her mother, Lady Frayne, has Boyne Abbey, near this. You'll probably see a good

deal of them; Kitty's up here most days."

Dora, whose back was to the window, turned to look at the equestrienne, but she and her pony had already disappeared. Dora had been gazing, with no special intent, at her cousin's portrait on the chimneypiece, and concluded with somewhat illogical logic, that as Mr. Arthur had been wandering two years in Africa, her ladyship's fascinations were probably not formidable. And though, when she saw Kitty, her instinctive admiration for everything that was pretty made her look with pleasure on those bright and dimpling cheeks and that childish perfection of person, she was still in no way taken aback.

"Lady Kitty Chevenix-Mrs. Lytton," said Barbara. Kitty's very rustic curiosity to behold in the flesh the young widow from Paris whose introduction to Carriconna she had helped to bring about, was not in any way disguised. She devoured Dora with her eyes while tugging frantically at her small glove, and before she had tugged the glove off she knew the precise shade of Dora's sunny hair, and that she, Kitty, had no dress in her wardrobe equal in style to Dora's plain white batiste. touched here and there with black ribbons.

"Catch mamma paying the washing bill for goffered frills like those!" was her ladyship's inward comment.

"How do you do?" she said to Dora. "You man-

aged to find out Ireland?"

"Yes; I began by looking it out on the map," replied Dora, whose smile it was not always easy to tell for a friendly one or otherwise.

"But you didn't find Carriconna on the map," returned Kitty; and added, in her sleeve, "I can talk

repartee, too."

However, they both laughed, and the scratches were

invisible.

Kitty knew no pride of birth; and as for Dora, no position of dependence could mar her rather well-developed sense of her own dignity. Besides, Dora's present position could scarcely be described as a dependent one; it was, on the contrary, one of considerable importance. Anthony and Kitty especially regarded the astronomical assistant in a much more serious light than (from that particular standpoint) Madame Dora regarded herself.

"We were going," said Anthony, "Mrs. Lytton and meself, to look at this flimsy shadow of a tower. Will

ye come, Kitty?"

"Yes, of course I will. You know, Mrs. Lytton, I was Astronomer Royal before you arrived. It was I who conspired with Mr. Nugent in his scheme; and Barbara, Miss Nugent I mean, has had me in her black books ever since."

"No, not a bit of it. It's the lives of you both I was afraid of; and I'm telling Mrs. Lytton just now

that she'll need to have a care of her own."

"Well, I have come to the conclusion," replied Dora, "that I am prepared, I won't say to sacrifice, but to risk mine in the interests of astronomy. But I must confess that, looking at the tower from here, I can't persuade myself that the risk is a very heroic one."

"Ye'll find it a great deal less so when ye're com-

fortably seated above on it," said Anthony.

"Come, then," said Kitty, "let us make the dreadful

ascent. I wonder how many times I have made it already!"

"And I wonder in whose company?" thought Dora. The famous tower has been briefly described in a former chapter. It had, at this period, a height of something less than eighty feet. Its original height had probably been about one hundred feet, but the upper storey had long since fallen and crumbled away—crumbled by reason of age—and fallen during the storms that sometimes raged with quite extraordinary violence on the lake whose shores the tower guarded.

I have used the term storeys, because, in fact, the tower had been divided into several storeys, or floors, the floors consisting of very flat stone arches, which rested on the sets-off in the walls. The walls were nearly four feet thick, slightly diminishing in thickness as the tower rose in height. It had three external setsoff, with projecting weathered string courses; and the door, which was circular headed, with a three-inch torus round it at the angle of the jamb, was placed about three feet from the ground. The masonry of the door was but together in a careful and laboured manner, and finely chiselled, each stone apparently having been worked as it was required. Of the original floors, one only—the topmost—remained in a perfect condition; it had been worn absolutely flat. The floor immediately beneath it remained in an imperfect state, about twothirds of it having fallen away from the set-off in the wall. There were stone steps within, mounting to the top, but they were newer than the rest of the structure, and doubtless the floors had formerly been reached by ladders, which were drawn up from one storey to another, as occasion might require. The uppermost floor, and the imperfect one beneath it, had circular apertures in their centres, and over the aperture in the top floor a stout wooden trap-door had been placed. During recent years the tower had been strengthened at various points by iron clamps; but, despite these aids, and the circumstance that it had a very slight inclination from the perpendicular, it had still a stable and enduring air.

"Oh, the sweet hot sun!" said Barbara, as they emerged upon the terrace. "I declare the summer's upon us. Mrs. Lytton, hadn't you better get your hat?"

"I brought it down with me," said Dora; "it's in the hall."

Dora could certainly have had no malicious purpose in view (for in Paris she had imagined no rival at Carriconna) when she selected in a shop in that well-known street of milliners, the fairy straw hat which she fetched from a peg in the hall. It was not a useless trifle to wear under a sunshade, but a fair wide-brimmed hat, as soft as silk, with just that suggestion of a "shape"—nothing and yet everything—which only your Paris milliner can effect. But, purpose or no purpose, the Paris hat asserted itself, as everywhere and at all times a work of genius must do.

"Oh!" cried Kitty, in tones of rapture; "what a

beautiful, what a lovely hat!"

Dora would have liked to be able to say, "I bought it for five francs," but as it had cost her more than six times that sum she had to content herself with a smiling:

"I am glad you like it; I bought it in Paris an hour

before I left."

"Yes, I am sure you didn't buy it in Dublin," said Kitty.

"Oh, but the Dublin shops are charming," said the good-natured Dora. "I walked through Sackville Street, Westmoreland Street, Dawson Street, and Nassau Street yesterday morning, and I am sure the things in the shops there were quite as pretty as in Paris."

"No," sighed Kitty, "they don't make hats like that in Dublin; at least they never show them to mamma

and me."

"Well, good-bye to ye till ye're down from the tower," said Barbara. "I'll go and see what peas I can get for lunch."

Seven o'clock dinner, by the way, had been instituted since Dora's invitation to Carriconna.

Anthony led the way up the tower, and Kitty followed Dora, for a more critical view of the Paris millinery. It was one of the charms of mounting the tower that ladies had to be pulled through the hole in the top floor, but this was an exercise of gallantry which Anthony had no proper feeling for. When the trap-door was let down the floor presented a smooth and even surface of considerable extent. The wall formed a secure parapet, and this top storey was a delightful coign of vantage on a clear summer's day.

"Oh, what a lake!" cried Dora, who until now had

seen but a corner of it.

"'Tis a good three miles from this end to the other,"

said Anthony.

The green, haunted hills that skirted one side of the lake of Carriconna were spotted with gorse and new springing fern, and the middle hill was topped by a curious little group of stunted oaks, around whose base was one of those magic rings which no peasant on the estate would dare to efface. On the opposite side the country stretched away for many an emerald mile to the faint horizon. Not all emerald, though, for a dark brown line of bog divided the landscape; the bog wherein that heifer of Anthony's had sunk, which he had sentenced to perpetual immersion "to encourage the others." It might be comforting to add, however, that the steward, with two or three of his bhoys, had long ago drawn the heifer out, alive and rheumatic.

"Look, Mrs. Lytton," said Kitty "there's Boyne

Abbey, where I live."

"There, through the trees?"

"Yes, you can only see a bit of the ruin of the Abbey from here."

"Well, tell me," said Anthony, "isn't this the one spot in Ireland for me observatory?"

"It's an ideal place," answered Dora. "But we shall

have to build this over, you know."

Then the recollection of her conversation with Barbara occurred to her, and she bethought her that she must give Anthony no lavish notions.

"A very simple little structure will do," she hastened to add; "we just want a protection for the telescope."

"We will, to be sure," responded Anthony. "We'll want to build up here no end. We'll want a grand dome of plate-glass to start with, and we'll fit this floor up in the greatest style that ever was. There'll be floods of people coming down here to ask after me discoveries, and 'twould be a great plan to have one of these new American elevators to fetch 'em up from below. And as the winter comes on, I don't know but we'll be wanting the electrical light to help out the moon."

"Oh, but you'll find very soon," said Dora, "when we begin our studies, that the less moon we have the better. The moon's not at all the blessing to astronomers

that it is to poets."

"Sure, how will we see the stars without the moon?"

said Anthony.

"Really now, Mr. Nugent," said Kitty, "'tis the sun ye'll be wantin' next to help ye see the skies at midnight!"

"Whisht!" said Anthony. "Go down quickly! there's Barbara with the tail of her skirt fixed in the hen-coop,

and the red hen's chickens in the lettuce-bed!"

# CHAPTER XI.

#### THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER.

KITTY stayed to luncheon, and she and Dora got to know a little more of, and rather to like, each other; though in a decidedly lukewarm fashion. Kitty could not pretend to disguise the admiration—her feeling was strong enough to warrant this term of description—which Dora's appearance, Dora's dress, and Dora's general self-possessedness excited in her; and it would have been difficult for anybody to do other than like Kitty. But they parted, as they had met, on neutral ground.

After luncheon came a local builder whom Anthony had summoned to assist in a consultation as to the alterations and additions to be made to the tower, and Dora had to keep up her reputation by talking very learnedly and dogmatically on matters she was not acquainted with, and also to prevent Anthony, as adroitly as she might, from allowing the builder to dip his hand too far into the purse. The afternoon was spent in this way.

After dinner, Anthony, not yet accustomed to this late function, showed a disposition to nod, and Barbara settled down to the newspaper. Dora, who had not had five minutes' solitude since morning, strolled out on to the terrace, thence into the garden, and beyond the garden into the plantation that skirted the road. A wicket-gate opened on the highway, and Dora presently found herself sauntering along the bog-road she had traversed on the previous evening. It was between a quarter and half-past eight, and the horizon was beginning to grow dim.

Dora's nature was always at its kindliest after dinner; and the green peas which Barbara had gathered that morning, and the ducklings reared by the tender hand of Kate Quinn, might have stimulated the sensibilities of a harder nature than hers.

She walked leisurely, and with no object but to enjoy the evening and her thoughts, both of which were soft and soothing. She had strolled perhaps for half a mile, and was thinking of turning back.

She liked the great dark bog stretching wide on either side of the road, covered in parts with long reaches of heather, thickly studded with stacks of new-cut turf, and interspersed in all directions with treacherous swamps and pits of black brown water. It was to her so fresh and strange a landscape.

She watched in the distance the disappearing figure of a peasant, whose back was bent under a huge basket of turf, and wondered to see him tread so firmly on ground that seemed no better than a morass. But she wondered much more when, a few minutes later, she saw

riding over the bog, at a rapid and even reckless pace, a horse and horseman, who seemed to be making direct for her.

Was it customary, she asked herself, for Irish squires to traverse bogs at evening in that breakneck style? Dora stood still and watched.

At every few paces the sodden ground gave beneath the horse, and now and then he appeared to sink over the fetlocks. But the rider seemed careless of danger.

Horse and man were now quite close to where Dora was standing; that is to say, not more than thirty yards from the road. Even at this distance Dora could see that the man laboured under strong excitement of some sort. His face was pale, and so rash was his riding that he seemed deliberately to choose the least secure bits of ground in his path. He stooped slightly over the horse's neck, and did not see Dora. And neither horse nor man saw that the ground immediately beside the road, at the point they were blindly making for, was a mere quagmire. Nor did Dora see it, for it was all grown over with heather. But in another moment the horse disappeared to the saddle flaps. With a movement that showed him both agile and powerful, the man instantly flung himself forward over the horse's head on to the bank, almost at Dora's feet, and seized the bridle of the still sinking horse.

Dora jumped down the bank and seized the bridle on the other side. The horse ceased sinking, and getting partly clear of the swamp began to plunge violently. A few struggles succeeded in giving him a grip of the bank with his fore legs, and another stout tug at the bridle on either side landed him firmly.

During these brief seconds the horseman had been conscious merely that a female figure had come with exemplary promptitude to his assistance. It was his turn to exhibit wonder when he saw the Paris hat and the face it shaded; the face wearing an expression half-amused and half-angry, with just a nuance of disdain over all.

. "Dear me! I really am dreadfully sorry," was his first utterance.

"For your horse chiefly, I hope," she replied. "Pardon me, but I think so good a horse deserves a----"

"A better rider."

"A more considerate, may I say?" For the horseman had shown no lack of ability in the saddle.

"Say whatever your indignation prompts," he answered, looking full at Dora with eyes of womanish softness.

"This is the most charming man in Ireland!" thought Dora. "But what is the matter with him?"

The sudden shock, and the exertion called forth by the horse's danger, had carried off the poignant excitement which Dora had observed in the gentleman; but there was something strange and unquiet in his air; those woman's eyes seemed to look through a haze, and the courteous, pleasant voice was deliberate and even constrained in its utterances, as though it were with some difficulty that it obeyed the speaker's will.

"I must say that a swamp like that seems to me an extraordinary place to ride full gallop on," said Dora, looking from the gentleman to his horse, which was still

nervous and trembling.

"Oh! but I do assure you the bog is not a swamp at all. It is safe enough in most places. I admit, however," he added, turning to and stroking his horse with an affectionate hand, "that it was not wise to ride at such a pace across this particular corner. We passed the hole"—this in a slow, musing tone, and more to himself than to Dora—"where Ned Conolly was drowned one night last winter. So, boy! So! It's over, it's over! Come now, have you no thanks to this lady for her gallant help? She did as much as I to save you. Thank her, sir."

He touched with his hunting-crop the near fore-leg of the horse, and the horse at once raised and extended

it towards Dora.

"Oh! you beautiful creature," she cried. "And to think that a moment ago I nearly saw you drown before my eyes! I am very glad I was able to help you, you beautiful, clever horse."

"Thank you, for both of us," returned the horse's master. "But, dear, dear! see how we have splashed

and stained you!"

Dora had changed the white batiste for a black cashmere for dinner. That garment was now plentifully bespattered with the thick turf-dyed water of the bog, a circumstance which Dora had already regretfully noted.

"Yes," she said; "I see. Altogether, may one venture to hope—for the horse's sake above all—that when you are for a Gilpin's ride again, you will choose terra firma

for your course?"

"Indeed, I am very sorry to have spoiled your

dress."

"Well, never mind the dress," she smiled. "It is more easily replaced than your horse would have been. Goodnight, and please take care of the horse."

"But you are going my way, I see," he said quickly.

Dora's face seemed to fascinate him. He had scarcely taken his eyes from it. He looked at it as one gazes for the first time upon the most beautiful object that has ever met his vision.

"I am going to Carriconna," said Dora.

"To Carriconna!" He seemed on the point of saying something further, but stopped. Then, after a moment, he added:

"We are within a quarter of a mile of Carriconna. It is growing dark; do allow me to bear you company to the gate."

"Thank you," she said; "if—you don't think you

ought to hasten home with the horse."

"A quiet walk will give him time to recover himself."

When they were within sight of the gate, Dora's companion turned to her suddenly and said, with a grave little smile, "May I ask how Carriconna strikes you after Paris?"

Dora could not prevent herself from starting, but her features were allowed to express no sort of emotion. Determined not to give the stranger an advantage by any

token of surprise at his question, she replied quietly,

"In Paris nobody is allowed to ride full gallop."

"A wise injunction. My question was abrupt, and therefore rude. I must ask your forgiveness again. And now here we are at the gate. My friends Mr. Nugent and Miss Barbara will want to know how you spoiled your dress. Please tell them you saved Mr. Trenchard's horse from drowning."

"Certainly the most charming man in Ireland," thought Dora again; "but a man not quite himself, I fancy." A shade came on her face, and she stood still on the drive. "No, not that—not wine, I think. I hope not. But what then? He rode like a madman. Well, I don't believe Carriconna will be too dull a place, after

all."

# CHAPTER XII.

### TRENCHARD AT HOME.

THE inspector stood at the gate until Dora had disappeared, and then, mounting his horse, which he had been leading by the bridle, he rode slowly homewards.

The house and estate of Moyrath, where Edmund Trenchard lived, and which he had owned since the death of Colonel Trenchard his father, lay about two miles from Carriconna. The house was a plain old redbrick mansion, not so imposing in its exterior as the great stables behind it, which the inspector had built for himself in recent years. Here he lived alone; and here with the exception of an occasional visit to Dublin, and a still more occasional one to London, he spent the whole year.

From the high-road, at a distance of a mile or so from Carriconna, Moyrath was approached by a smaller road, now not much used, but a famous one in days gone by, when it had been traversed daily by the mail coach to Dublin.

At the entrance to the drive, Mr. Trenchard was met

by his English servant, William. William Jones, excavalry sergeant, who had fought through the latter portion of the Crimean war, in the regiment commanded by Edmund Trenchard's father, was about twenty years the senior of his present master—about fifty-five, that is to say—a man with a splendid carriage, a silent tongue, and a limitless devotion to Trenchard; but a devotion in which there was no element of servility. For many months past, the sergeant's master had been an object of especial and unusual concern to him, for reasons which will become apparent. His face at this moment had an unquiet look, which was in no way modified when he observed that the inspector was splashed and turfstained from head to foot, and his horse in a like con-He said nothing, however, as he held the gate dition. open.

"Rather late, William!" said Mr. Trenchard, not seeking his servant's eye, as he rode through the gate.

"Over an hour late, sir," answered William, and followed his master up the drive with his severe, military

step.

Inspector Trenchard's bachelor home was ordered in perfect style. He dined ordinarily at half past seven, sitting down at that hour, in evening dress, to four courses, in the red candle-lit dining-room. always waited upon by William, to whom he generally talked with considerable freedom during dinner. was, indeed, the period of the day at which confidences of one sort or another were often interchanged between master and man. If the inspector had spent the day, or any part of it, away from home, he always had something to say about his doings; matters relating to the estate he talked of freely to the sergeant, and often gave him some official anecdote. But lately, during those months in which his master's health and general bearing had caused so much anxiety to his devoted servant, the sergeant had noticed that the inspector's moods had been very variable; thus, he would sit throughout dinner uncommunicative, and in almost total silence; not, however, the silence of displeasure, or sullenness,

but of extreme mental dejection. At other times he would sparkle with an unnatural gaiety, but this condition was no more pleasing to the faithful sergeant than the former one. He knew the springs of both these moods, and here was the cause of his trouble on his master's account.

But on this evening there was yet another change in the inspector's manner. He was neither communicative nor uncommunicative; that is to say, he talked with needless excitement of this thing and that, topics interesting neither to the speaker nor his audience, and evidently called up as a mere excuse for speech. The inspector had ridden out early that evening on his best horse, leaving no word as to where he was going or when he would return; one of those aimless and purposeless rides which, of late, he had been more and more in the habit of taking. William had seen, on his master's return, that he had had a misadventure of some sort; but upon this matter the inspector refused to say more at dinner than that he had ridden across the bog and slipped into a soft place.

This evening, too, he was in a hurry to get through his dinner, a meal that generally filled an agreeable hour; and William found himself at liberty to adjourn to the housekeeper's room a full twenty minutes earlier than

usual.

I say the housekeeper's room, for the sergeant had a half share in that comfortable sanctum in virtue of his position as husband of the housekeeper. The housekeeper, Mrs. William Jones, a handsome woman of not much more than fifty, had, like her husband, passed many years in the service of the Trenchard family. She had been Trenchard's nurse and playfellow when a girl of seventeen, and lady's maid to his mother a few years later. She shared her husband's concern for the curious and alarming state of their master's health.

"Very queer to-night," said the sergeant glumly as he

sat down to supper.

"Did he take any wine?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"Very little."

"And----?"

"No," said the sergeant, "no—not while I was there;

but he's sent me away before my time, you see."

"And how was he?" said Mrs. Jones anxiously.
"Did he talk anything? Did he tell you how he came by those stains?"

"Slipped into the bog," answered the sergeant.

A look of nothing less than fright crossed the house-keeper's face.

"The bog!" she said; "slipped into the bog?"

"Riding across it—slipped into a hole, or a soft place, he said. The Duke must have been nearly ears over by the look of him; I don't know how either of 'em escaped. But the master's as strong and nimble on his legs as the colonel was."

"Oh! William," said Mrs. Jones. "I'm just sick with fright about this. I never knew him do so rash a thing before. Oh, my, my! I wish we had some help for

him."

"He's doing his best to help himself, the poor man," said the sergeant; "and a horrible sight it is sometimes. I've seen him sit and shiver there, like a man with the ague—fighting against it."

"It's terrible! And the kindest and sweetest man in

the world," said Mrs. Jones.

"Yes; his mother's sweetness," said the sergeant. "I

wish he had but his father's strength."

"That's where I always tell you you're wrong," said his wife. "It's a sickness of the body as much as it's

anything else."

"It's one of those sicknesses where the body and t'other thing are both in it together. But I'm not for judging him; and—there's his bell—is his coffee

ready?"

When Sergeant Jones took the coffee up to the diningroom Mr. Trenchard was standing with his hands behind his back at the open window. He had drawn back the curtains and thrown up the sash, and he took no notice of William's entry. The sergeant set down the coffee and withdrew.

Trenchard drank his coffee slowly, emptying three small cups in succession out of the little silver pot. "Ten minutes to ten," he said, glancing at the clock upon the mantelpiece. "The pretty stranger has related her adventure by this time. What a freak of Nugent's, to bring her over from Paris. Will she stay, I wonder? How quick she was down the bank, just now; and what magnificent hands." He spread his own out mechanically before him. "Seven minutes to ten; six hours since the demon got the better of me. I'll not give in again to-night. I won't—I won't—I won't." He turned to fill himself another cup of coffee; the pot was empty. He drained the dregs of the cup he had already drunk. "Suppose I were to take one glass of wine instead; just one glass of wine." He rose and crossed the room to the sideboard, stooped and turned the key of one of the cupboards. Then he shut his eyes and set his teeth hard, for a moment.

"No," he said rising. "I'll drink no wine, either. Two minutes to ten. There is the whole night to face

vet."

Then, with a sudden remembrance of former nights of agony scarcely to be endured, a kind of spasm seized him. He was standing against the marble mantelpiece, and he clutched it with both hands. His face grew pale, and moisture broke on his forehead. In this state of painful and violent tension, all the forces of his will and body battling against the fierce craving within him, he remained for a couple of minutes. Then he let go of the mantelpiece.

"That's done," he said. "I shall hold out for to-

night."

He wiped his forehead, and filling a tumbler of water from a small filter on the sideboard, he drank it at a draught. Then ringing his bell, he went to the door and waited until he heard William's step upon the stairs.

"You can go to bed, William," he called; "I shan't want anything more to-night."

William understood, by his master's calling to him,

that he was not to enter the room. But before returning downstairs he paused for a moment.

"William," said his master from the dining-room, "I

am much better to-night."

"Thank you, sir," said the sergeant, and at once went downstairs.

Mr. Trenchard waited until he heard the fastening of doors below; then he stepped through the open window and walked quietly up and down the avenue.

"Very curious," he said to himself; "it was simply

the thought of her that made me win to-night."

## CHAPTER XIII.

#### JUPITER.

"'In view of the incraysing demand for astronomical telescopes of moderate price, Messrs. Wilson and Everett have constructed one which, while it effectu'lly accomplishes all that is required in an elementary study of the heavenly bodies, is ayoually useful as a telescope for terrestrial objects, or for marking in rifle practice.' Is that about the thing for us, Mrs. Lytton?" asked Anthony.

"I should say that is just what we want," replied

Dora.

"Wait till ye hear further of it," said Anthony, and continued his reading: "'It will show Jupiter's moons'—'pon me word, now, I thought Jupiter was dead this ages ago—'and Saturn's ring and moons'—here's the whole Mythology upon us, I declare! Sure I thought 'twas astronomy we were to be studying—'and resolve some of the double stars'—I didn't hear tell of them before—'while for terrestrial objects it will define well at a distance of from ten to fifteen miles'—d'ye hear that? I'll have the whole country round under me eye—'and will show bullet marks on a target at the longest ranges.' Tare an' ouns, did y' ever hear the like of it?"

"What's the price?" inquired Dora.

""While for terrestrial objects'—why, not a thing can happen for miles around, but I'll know it at the minyut!"

"How much is it, Mr. Nugent?" asked Dora.

"I'll have no more turf stole from me bog, anyway; the strip that's two miles beyant there will be under me very nose. 'Twill be nearer than the fowl-yard."

"What is the price of the telescope, Mr. Nugent?"

"Isn't it ten thousand wonders that I never thought I wanted a telescope till now? Ay, and 'tis right thankful I should be that I never guessed how bad I needed it in those times, when I couldn't have had it. Whoroo! the times I'll be having now!"

Anthony had clean forgotten the astronomical purposes for which the telescope was to have been bought.

"You haven't yet said how much it is to cost, Mr.

Nugent."

"The price? Well that's no great matter. down here. What's this - five guineas ! There's some mistake about this. 'Tisn't possible ye could do all that with a poor little thing that 'd cost ye only five guineas. Sure I'm not going to build an observatory to put fiveguinea telescopes in it! No, no, indeed! Ah! but wait," he said, turning the page of the catalogue, "we're not at the end of it yet; here's something here a little apter for us. 'Achromatic Astronomical and Terrestrial Telescopes; Universal Equatorial Telescopes; Mean and Sidereal Time Clocks.' We're amongst the quality now. We begin at eighteen guineas here, and we go by leps and bounds till we're at five hundred pounds in no The mean and sidereal time clock will cost me eighty-seven pounds itself. Some of these fellows should be able to see through a hill for me."

"That would not bring us any nearer the moon, you know," said Dora. "It's the heavens and not the earth we must be thinking about. Please give me the catalogue for a minute. I think we may leave mean and sidereal time clocks alone for the present; and I don't fancy we shall require the universal equatorial telescope

yet awhile. Now look at that; there's a lovely little instrument there, astronomical and terrestrial both; two-inch object glass; terrestrial and astronomical eyepieces; and all for ten guineas. Don't you think that

would do very well to begin with?"

"No, me dear Mrs. Lytton, that 'd never do at all, at all," said Anthony emphatically. "We musn't be starving science in that way. 'Twould be a poor compliment to Jupiter and what's-his-name—the chap with the rings—to make a cheap thing like that the go-between 'twixt us and them. I'd be ashamed to do it; I would, I give ye my word."

"Well, then," said Dora, "here's one at fifteen

guineas."

"No, no," said Anthony. "I see Jupiter and Saturn -that's the man I wanted-tilting their noses at us, merely to think of it. 'The Nugents,' says Jupiter, 'must be an outright different family now from what I remember 'em in Buck Nugent's day, if Anthony there is going to scrape acquaintance with us through a telescope like that, and be able to paper his house with bank notes this minyut.' I wouldn't venture into the presence of Jupiter, Mrs. Lytton, behind anything cheaper than a hundred guinea instrument. How do I know but Buck and the rest of them are up there with Jupiter this very hour? and 'twould be a terrible reflection on them when they'd come to hear of it. And isn't it very doubtful whether one of these low-priced things would give us any sensible sight of Jupiter and Buck-supposing Buck's with him? Jupiter must be a good piece of a way from this, ye know."

"Yes," said Dora, "Jupiter is a very long way off from us. How far do you suppose, now, Mr. Nugent?"

"I'm pretty good at calculating distances, but at a range like that I wouldn't engage to come within five miles or so. But I'll hazard that from where we're sitting on the tower here, Jupiter's the whole of a thousand miles from us. I said I wouldn't engage meself within five miles or so."

"Well, now wait," said Dora gravely; "let's take

the sun first; the sun's distance, you know, is a mere nothing in comparison with Jupiter's. But if we were to start for the sun after lunch to-day in, let me say, one of your Irish expresses—they don't go much more than thirty miles an hour, do they?—we should get to the sun in about three hundred and forty years. Now, to reach Jupiter, travelling night and day at the rate of thirty miles an hour, without stopping at any junctions, it would take us, roughly speaking, about two thousand years."

Anthony simply sat and stared at Dora; his big bony hands stretched out towards her, helpless and beseech-

ing.

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"Jupiter," said Dora more quietly than ever, "is nearly six hundred million miles from where we're sitting."

Anthony still sat and stared; then his tongue began

slowly to move, and he gasped:

"Buck---"

"Yes," said Dora, "what of Buck?"

"He's not there yet," said Anthony in an awful whisper.

"Buck didn't go by train, you know."

"N-no," said Anthony quite dazed. "He wouldn't go that way, I suppose. He'd hardly go that way. But

'tis a terrible thing to think of."

"Think how light travels," said Dora. "A ray of light from the sun, or Jupiter, or any of the stars or planets, flashes through space at the rate of 188,000 miles in a second."

"I suppose, mebbe, it might," said Anthony meekly.
"I wouldn't question it. Ye're a dreadful clever woman,
Mrs. Lytton; ye have me broke entirely. Take y'r own
judgment on this matter; I think yourself knows best
what sort of an instrument we want. Me own head's
going faster than any express train this minyut. I'll
shunt meself into a siding for awhile. The tower's not
too steady. Let's go down, if ye please."

## CHAPTER XIV.

#### VISITORS.

Anthony sat under an astronomical cloud (if so nebulous an expression may be permitted) during luncheon. He was still journeying, at thirty miles an hour, to Jupiter, and, as might be expected, the aerial excursion had fairly lost him his hold on terra firma. When Barbara spoke to him, he stretched his ears and peered at her through half-closed eyes, as one who, perched on some lunar pinnacle, should try to hear and see a person on the earth. Dora, on the other hand—eating her luncheon with accustomed relish and inwardly enjoying the results of her first lesson—he continued to regard as years, nay, cycles ahead of him on that interminable stellar voyage. Not much sublunary talk was to be drawn from him.

"I saw your friend, the inspector, riding past this morning," said Barbara to Dora.

"I hope was going at a more sensible pace to day."

"Yes, he was riding quietly enough this morning. Indeed, they generally say about here that he's the safest, as well as the best, rider in the county; though I'm told he's not quite so steady a rider as he used to be."

"What are the duties of a county inspector?" asked Dora.

"Oh, they're important enough in the constabulary; he has the county in charge, as one might say; and like every one connected with the constabulary, he hasn't always the pleasantest time of it nowadays. Still he's as popular a man as could be all over the county."

"I had an idea," said Dora—" somehow, one has the most extraordinary ideas about Ireland—that inspectors in the constabulary were a sort of common targets for

those people they call moonlighters."

"Oh, indeed, the constabulary, must take their chance

with the landlords in that matter; but ours is, thank

goodness, as peaceful a district as any."

"Don't forget, though," said Anthony, dropping suddenly from the skies, "that he was shot at going home from this one night. If ye noticed," he added to Dora, "a couple of ash trees standing close together on the road close to the bog; 'twas through those trees they fired at him."

"Why, that's not half a mile from the house," said

Dora.

"No, much closer than that," said Anthony. "We heard the shot in this room."

"That was very close at home," said Dora; "was Mr.

Trenchard hit?"

- "No, but the bullet struck the step of the car he was driving, just below his foot. They didn't wait to fire twice, for 'tis known hereabouts that he has six chambers loaded in his pocket at night, and a grand pistol shot too."
- "But I think the men were not from this part of the county at all," said Barbara; "and that's the only time he was ever shot at. But it was an odd thing of him to join the constabulary at all, with that nice place of his at Moyrath, and an income to keep it up."

"Then he's a landlord as well as a constabulary

officer?" said Dora.

"Yes, and four thousand a year, if he has a penny," replied Barbara.

"And is there a Mrs. Trenchard?"

"No, and I begin to think there'll not be."

"Lady Frayne there wouldn't be sorry to get him for Kitty," put in Anthony, with a slightly malicious wink at his sister.

"Let Kitty alone now; that's not what's going to

happen at all."

"Oh!" thought Dora, "and what is going to happen? Aunt Barbara talks positively."

But upon this point Aunt Barbara talked no more, and her manner invited no questions.

"As for Trenchard and the constabulary," said

Anthony, "he joined it for the self-same reason that I'm going to turn astronomer. He's a man like meself that thinks a great deal about his spayshies—his species, I'd say," for Dora's beautiful accent was another cause of envy to Anthony. "And he's like meself too, a man of tremenjus—tremendous—activity. He must have an object in life, the very same as meself. He's a great example to the nation in that way, as, please Heaven, I'll be meself."

"Well, I'm for showing examples at home first," said Barbara; "and I hope there's no person in this part of the country will get so near the sun as to let himself be blinded to his duties on the five acre farm against the bog, that has needed draining these twenty years."

"Ye didn't order that table linen yet," said Anthony; and for further reply he jerked his catalogue out of his

pocket, and fell to upon it.

"Suppose we decide upon the telescope at once," said Dora, when lunch was over; for there was no knowing how soon Anthony might emerge from the condition of awe-struck humility to which Dora had but just reduced him, and with the return of his old self he would certainly insist on choosing his own telescope.

"More power to ye! me great little astronomer, that's just what we'll do; and when we've found the one we

want we can send on for it at once."

When they were seated at the table, with the catalogue between them, Anthony took out and laid his chequebook before him, his favourite method just now of stimulating his imagination.

Dora, however, adroitly covered the book with the sheet of paper on which she made her calculations, for she had observed that her uncle was never so prodigally disposed as when his eye was on his cheque-book.

At the end of half an-hour her diplomacy and tact persuaded Anthony to the choice of a twenty-five pound telescope, in place of the hundred-pound instrument on which he had first set his affections.

"That will take us quite as near to Jupiter as we shall want to get, just yet," she said.

At Anthony's request Dora then wrote an order for the telescope, to be forthwith dispatched to Carriconna. Anthony enclosed his cheque and signed the letter.

"I'll take this to the post meself," said he. "This is

a letter that should be registered."

Dora watched him down the drive, his hand upon the pocket that held the letter, and then sauntered down the

garden.

Barbara was grubbing around the strawberry beds with her trowel, an unfailing occupation with her when she could do nothing else in the garden. Dora went and stood beside her.

"You are going to have a splendid crop of fruit, Miss

Nugent."

"I think it is certain," said Barbara, pausing in her work to eye with affection the wealth of white blossoms all about her. "These beds are just in their prime; John Maher and I replanted them three years since. There, that's enough for them to-day. Come, till we look at the roses; there's fine promise in them too."

"Look," said Dora, pointing through a break in the plantation beyond; "are those the two ash trees from

behind which Mr. Trenchard was shot at?"

"That's the direction, any way," said Barbara. "What splendid sight you've got. Who's this Anthony's bringing up the drive? That's the Boyne Abbey car. It's Lady Frayne and Kitty. Have they seen us, d'ye think? I'm in my garden gown, and I might change it."

But Kitty, who was driving, signalled Barbara with her whip, and she knew that if she went to make a fresh toilet now Lady Frayne would have something to say

on the subject.

Kitty sat on one side of the jaunting car, and her mother on the opposite side, and Kitty had on the seat beside her what looked like a short and well-filled bolster, but what was in fact a heavily-weighted cushion, which served as ballast, and maintained the equilibrium of the car. The necessity of this arrangement was more plainly seen when, as Anthony assisted Lady Frayne to alight, her side of the car tilted up alarmingly.

"These cars are terrible awkward things, when a person gets to be my weight," remarked her ladyship. "I declare, Anthony, you couldn't give me much at the scales now!"

"Go 'long with ye," said Anthony. "I'm the lighter of the two this minyut. I'll introduce Mrs. Lytton, with your leave, Sarah. My neighbour, Lady Frayne, Mrs. Lytton. Sarah, I wish ye could hear Mrs. Lytton talking of the powers of an equinoctial telescope."

"Equatorial," said Dora, laughing in the midst of her

bow to Lady Frayne.

"Is that the hat Kitty's been distracted about?" asked her ladyship. "I've been moidered about that hat, Mrs. Lytton, this twenty-four hours. It's a grand hat, I declare."

"Well, and how is everything at the Abbey?" said Barbara. "Are ye still in trouble with the steward?"

"I am, indeed," replied Lady Frayne. "I'm sure he's robbing me right and left. I'm a great coward not to have sent him off long ago. But ye see the way of it is, there are half a dozen of the family working about the place, and they have their relations all over the village; so if I sent the steward packing to-morrow, as I ought to do, we'd be boycotted by the whole neighbourhood."

"That's not a pleasant look-out, to be sure," said Barbara.

"'Deed no, it isn't," said Lady Frayne. "But that's just the way I am, and I don't know what I'll do. Here's the hay nearly ready to be cut, and if I send Mangan about his business, Kitty and meself will have to cut it the best way we can, and the corn after it."

"We'll give ye a hand from here, if it comes to that,"

said Anthony.

"Yes," said Kitty, "I said you would. I don't believe it would be so dreadful at all. The summer would be a big picnic."

"Yes," said her mother, "with the police to wait on

you with fixed bayonets. I'm not for picnicing that

way, if it's to be helped, I can assure ye, Kitty."

"Oh! well I hope it won't come to that with ye, Sarah. But we'll go round to the garden, and have some tea out there," said Barbara. "Kitty, I don't know where John Maher is; ye'd better drive round to the yard, and maybe ye'll find him there."

"Well, and where's this telescope, Anthony?" asked Lady Frayne. "Oh! I forgot; ye've just sent for it, ye said. It's a great piece of work you have before you, Mrs. Lytton. Will you ever make an astronomer of

him, d'ye think?"

"Oh, yes! indeed I shall, Lady Frayne. He would astonish you already, and he has only had one lesson."

"That's very promising, I declare! Will ye give us

a taste of your knowledge, Anthony?"

"Well, why wouldn't I? Listen to this now, Sarah. If ye took train from Dubl'n after y'r dinner this evening, how long d'ye suppose ye'd be getting to Jupiter?"

"Faith! I'd be long enough, I don't doubt."
"Ye'd be about two thousand years, Sarah."

"I would, and longer; for I'd never get to Jupiter that way at all—nor you either, Anthony. We'd get there as soon on the car."

"I see ye have no head for astronomy, Sarah. Ye're not teachable that way. It wants just the lowliest

spirit in the world."

"Oh! in that case you're the very man for it. Mrs. Lytton, you're lucky in getting so natural a pupil. Here's

Kitty, with Mr. Trenchard, I think."

"Yes, indeed," said Barbara. "It's a great while since he honoured us with a call. How are you, Mr. Trenchard? I was just saying it's long since you were here."

"I submit the plea of work," said Trenchard, who looked very well and handsome that afternoon, in his riding kit of medium grey and round grey hat to match. "You astronomers, you know, and you scientific gardeners," he added, turning to Anthony and from him to Lady Frayne, "require to work in peaceful surround-

ings. It's my business, don't you see, to keep every thing nice and quiet for you. I'm like somebody or other in a poem by somebody. Doesn't somebody remember it?"

Trenchard's eyes were already upon Dora, and Dora's fluty tones responded to his question:

# " The wretch that works and weeps without relief."

I really beg your pardon, but your question brought that line from Cowper into my mind," she said smiling.

"The line that wouldn't come into my own mind,"

returned Trenchard. "Thank you."

The quotation seemed so absurdly inapt (Trenchard looking so like some light-hearted knight of the Castle of Indolence) that everybody laughed, but Trenchard's laugh was the briefest.

"Ye've met Mrs. Lytton before, I think," said

Anthony, with a grin all to himself.

This being the first time he had heard Dora's name,

Trenchard bowed to her as he replied:

"I have had that pleasure and advantage. Mrs. Lytton was liberal of her aid to two poor fallen creatures, one of whom, at any rate, but for her might not have risen again."

"There's a grand speech for you! What's it about, pray? Have you been in a bog-hole?" asked Lady Frayne, staring through her tortoiseshells alternately at

Trenchard and Dora.

"Indeed it's no fault of his own that he isn't in it now—he and his horse," said Anthony.

"But what's the story?" chimed Kitty. "I'm sure it's not like you, Mr. Trenchard, to ride into bog-holes."

"He was the most adventurous rider in Ireland that night, from what I hear," put in Barbara, and slipped away to the house.

"The first that ever took a horse over that bit o' the

bog, anyhow," said Anthony.

"Give him leave to tell it himself, can't ye?" said Lady Frayne. Trenchard told the adventure, giving, as may be

supposed, full honours to Dora.

"I don't think I did quite all that," she said, Trenchard having credited her with the agility of an acrobat and the strength of an Amazon. "But if I had done even more, it would have been worth while, for the sake of the pretty thanks Mr. Trenchard's horse gave me when we had pulled him out."

"And how did he thank ye?" inquired Lady Frayne, who was rather interested in Dora, and thought Anthony a fool for keeping her a moment on his premises. "She'll make what running she likes here, I'll go bail!"

reflected her ladyship.

"Oh! in the most delightful way. He thanked me

with his eyes and he shook hands with me."

Here came Kate Quinn with the tea-tray, followed by Barbara with the cream-jug, an article she was rather jealous of, for of late years cream had been chiefly noticeable by its absence at Carriconna. John Maher brought up the rear with a ponderous wicker chair for Lady Frayne, one of Anthony's new purchases, the others being left to seat themselves where and as they pleased.

"Well, have ye much money left, Anthony?" asked Lady Frayne, with a chuckle, as she subsided into the

capacious wicker chair.

"Whips of it," said Anthony. "Sure I didn't begin to spend yet, at all. At present I'm just thinking about it. But I'll be able to show you something by and by."

"Well, and what about your observatory? Haven't

ye made a beginning there?"

"Just a bit of a start. But that's a mair trifle."

"Now, Sarah, don't be leading him on to talk in that foolish way," said Barbara. "The man's just prepared for any absurdity a person could think of, and it's restraining him his friends should be, and not encouraging him."

I don't know whether Anthony or Lady Frayne enjoyed this the more. Lady Frayne, accustomed to the penurious notions and meagre ways of the old

Anthony, the Anthony of days gone by, found a huge delight in exploiting him in his new character; and

Anthony was always ready to be "drawn."

"I'm going to make me peace with Barbara," he said.
"I'm going to plan a hen and turkey farm of her own for her, and give her Pope's powers over it. 'Tis then that she'll be aisy—easy, I should say—in her mind."

"And ye're taking great pains with your talk, too, I observe," said Lady Frayne. "Is it long since 'aisy'

wasn't good enough for ye?"

"Mr. Nugent is getting ready for a great visit to

Jupiter," interposed Dora.

"And how do we know but they have a fine brogue of their own in Jupiter?" said Lady Frayne.

"But nobody lives in Jupiter at all," said Kitty, and

was promptly pounced upon by Anthony.

"Who's after telling ye that, miss?" said he.

"Awfully warm for them, I should think, if there are

any fellows up there," said Trenchard.

But further discussion as to the habitability of Jupiter and its possible inhabitants, was prevented by a sudden and almost startled exclamation from Kitty.

"Who in the world is that?" she cried, as a figure

approached in the near distance.

It was a man's figure, of about Anthony's height, and well shaped, in a seedy Norfolk jacket, sewn all over with pockets, and a pair of not less seedy knicker-bockers. The stranger's face was a shade or two browner than the traditional walnut.

"It's Arthur! It's Arthur!" said Kitty again, now

fairly screaming.

"If 'tis he, I'll never forgive ye, Kitty, for being the first to see him," answered Barbara, fetching out and hastily adjusting her glasses. "It is Arthur! the dear boy! It's himself!"

It was Arthur's self indeed.

Kitty and Barbara both rushed to meet him; an

unequal race, and Kitty won it.

"Kitty! my Kitty!" and off the ground went her little ladyship's feet, and Dora and everybody else heard with great distinctness the kiss that followed. It was the first time Arthur had kissed her in public. But it was also the first time he had returned home from Africa.

"And not a word to give us time to get ready for ye!" said Barbara, whose turn came next, and who had certainly no reason to complain of her share of salutations.

"Ready! what's to get ready, dear?" cried Arthur. "You're ready for me yourself, and that's enough! Why, your worship" (to his father), "you've been growing backwards, I declare—if you haven't bought a hair-dye. I'm certain you were greyer when I went away. How are you, Lady Frayne? Hullo, Trenchard! Why, my dear," he said, turning to Barbara, "if you'd sent out invitations you couldn't have made a kinder show for me. Now, may I go in and eat?"

## CHAPTER XV.

### ONE TRAVELLER RETURNS.

"YE may eat the whole place out," said Barbara. "I daresay ye're famishing with hunger. I don't suppose now that ye've had a decent meal these two years. Give me another kiss, my boy! I'm just dazed with delight, I am. Come in now, come in."

And she carried the hero off to the house, to be regaled on "the first decent meal he had had for two years."

Everybody was excited. Kitty could hardly contain herself, and not even the presence of Dora prevented her from showing her joy. To Dora, who was formally introduced to Arthur (though not as an inmate of the house—that was a surprise reserved for him), the scene had a comic interest of its own. Her cousin evidently supposed her to be of the Doyne Abbey party, some friend of Kitty or her mother, and Dora was picturing to herself the amazement with which he would receive

the news that she was a member of the Carriconna household. Arthur had heard by letter from Barbara of the death of his uncle Kedagh, and also that his father had inherited that uncle's fortune; but as, during Kedagh's lifetime, none of them had known what his wealth amounted to, Arthur had not been very vividly impressed by that intelligence.

"Great news I'll have for him! Great news indeed!" said Anthony, rubbing his hands and chuckling to himself. "Now I wonder will Arthur be for turning

astronomer too?"

"Oh! not he indeed," said Lady Frayne, "and he'll

laugh you out of it before long, Anthony."

"Ye think that, do ye? And I having but just sent off for me telescope. And I'll engage that when it comes Arthur will 'explore Africa' just as well sitting on the tower there as when he was in Africa itself. Don't you think he will, Mrs. Lytton?"

"We must hear first how far his explorations have taken him, and what they have resulted in," replied Dora. "I really don't think there is much of Africa left

to explore, by telescope or any other method."

Kitty had followed Arthur and Miss Nugent into the house. Anthony and Lady Frayne now took their steps in the same direction. Trenchard seemed uncertain whether to say good-bye, or to go after them. The result of his hesitation was that he and Dora were left together in the garden, within sight and hearing of the party in the dining-room.

"A great event!" said Trenchard.

"Quite," answered Dora.

"Arthur will have a good deal to hear as well as to tell."

"Yes, there are several surprises in store for him, I think."

"The telescope for one," laughed Trenchard. "That will be an amusing surprise for him."

"And I shall be the most amusing of all, I'm afraid."
"Well, I suppose you will be a surprise too, Mrs.
Lytton."

"And don't you think I shall be an amusing one?"
"If you mean by that a pleasant one. I will say yes a

"If you mean by that a pleasant one, I will say yes at once."

"But I didn't mean that."

"I really can't assent to any other proposition, Mrs. Lytton."

There was neither flippancy nor badinage in his tone, which was penetrated with that winning courtesy, touched by a gentle humour, which made most women like him and trust him from the first. Dora's thoughts were all unconsciously borne back to the days of her first love. She did not, however, make any direct reply to what he had last said.

"You are an *intime* of the family, Mr. Trenchard," she said; "tell me, please, are Mr. Arthur and Lady Kitty engaged to one another? I would not presume to ask such a question, if Mr. Arthur himself had not so

openly admitted us all to his confidence."

"Yes, didn't he though? Engaged? No, I never heard that they were engaged, but it's no secret they have been more than friends for I don't know how many years past; ever since Arthur left school, in fact. But, you know, there is not too much money in the coffers at Doyne Abbey, and Lady Frayne—"

"And Lady Frayne is a prudent mother? Is that

what you mean, Mr. Trenchard?"

"Prudent is the word, I suppose," said he; "an ugly

word though, in this relation, I always think."

"Maybe," said Dora; "but it has its accepted significance. We are falling more and more into Talleyrand's habit of using speech to conceal our thoughts. I hope your horse is none the worse for his mud bath last night."

"Not a bit, thank you. What a madman I must have seemed to you last night, Mrs. Lytton. I am

ashamed to think of it."

Trenchard's face grew positively sad, and he looked narrowly at Dora, who was not, however, looking at him.

"Why were you riding in that way over such dan

gerous ground?" she said; and as there was some abruptness in the question she qualified, or tempered it, with a smile, as though it were asked only half seriously.

"I rode in that way," said Trenchard slowly, "because — What would you think of me if I said because some other will than my own were guiding me last night?"

"I should have no choice but to ask you for an explanation," she said with a smile, half gay and half

cajoling.

They looked at one another. Dora's face was playful. If there were any serious intent behind her words she masked it cunningly. Trenchard's face was grave, with something wistful in it. He tried to return the smile that looked so guileless on her lips. Dora saw the effort, and being predisposed to like him she was touched.

"Some day, perhaps, I will give you the explanation."

"How beautiful the lake is from here," said Dora, in a tone suggesting that the lake was as interesting a subject as any that Trenchard could offer her. Possibly she thought that when she had hinted her desire for an explanation it should have been given her on the spot.

"Yes," said Trenchard; "but it looks better in a

storm."

"I prefer it calm," replied Dora. "I like everything better in calm than in storm, and I don't think I care much whether the calm is a treacherous one. Now, do we act more considerately in leaving those merry people to themselves in there, or ought we to go and swell the chorus of delight over the traveller's return? On the whole, I think we ought to go in."

"I am sure we are quite forgotten."

"Then let us go and recall ourselves. Did you come on horseback to-day? Yes, I see you have your spurs. Do you ride a great deal?"

"Yes, I am generally in the saddle some hours every day. And you, Mrs. Lytton, have you any taste for it?"

"Yes, but it is a taste I have not been able to gratify for a long time. I did once ride a great deal."

"You have lived much abroad?"

"The greater part of my life. As for Ireland, it is a foreign country to me."

"But Ireland is always a foreign country to the

English, you know," laughed Trenchard.

"Which has been rather the worse for both countries, I'm afraid."

"For Ireland at all events."

# CHAPTER XVI.

### ANTHONY HAS A SURPRISE.

It was the morrow of Arthur's home-coming. Dora, whose room was at right angles with his, could hear him singing (like Mr. Gladstone) as he dressed, his window thrown wide. Barbara had had him early to bed the night before, like a schoolboy just home for the holidays.

Arthur had left Carriconna two years previously, sick of a life in which he had nothing to do but pretend to work on an estate where there was no work to be done. because there was no money with which to do it. had gladly and eagerly accepted Lord Kilcreevy's offer to accompany him to Africa, hoping, as everybody hopes who sets forth on his first expedition of that sort, to find at any rate—something. He had found a new variety of fever, which had proved a quite sufficient fortune for the day, since it had completely prostrated and very nearly killed him. It had moreover compelled him to turn his back as speedily as possible on the land of his expectations, in which—in addition to the fever—he had picked up nothing more saleable than a smattering of two native dialects. A short rest in Europe had served to set him on his feet again, and half way home he had been met by Barbara's letter telling him of the unexpected turn affairs had taken at Carriconna.

But it was not until he and Barbara were alone in his

room, where his aunt at once laid claim to her ancient privilege of unpacking the bag, that he learned how rich a man his father now was. Then and there, too, he had the full story of Dora's coming, and of the extraordinary duties she was to fulfil; a subject over which Arthur was extravagantly and indeed uproariously merry.

"And now, Arthur, my dear, dear boy, promise me that ye're going to settle down at home. Please goodness ye'll never need to go fortune-hunting again. Your father talks in a terrible foolish way of all he's going to spend, but I begin to think there won't be much more than talk about it after all. I've had the greatest talks with him about yourself and Kitty. Lady Kitty Nugent! Doesn't that sound nice, now? And your father is more sensible and reasonable about it than I thought he'd be. There's that lovely nest of a place, Slaughterstown, standing empty, quite handy from here; I told him he should be buying it for the pair of ye. Sure, the land touches our own, I said, and the two estates are as good as one this moment, except for the little bit of a sum that Slaughterstown's to be sold for."

"He'll never buy Slaughterstown, will he?"

"Oh! but he will. What's in his way to stop him?"

"His observatories, and his Mrs. Lyttons, and

goodness knows what!" laughed Arthur.

"He has enough, and more, for all. I'll give him no peace till he's done what's right by ye both. As for scattering his fortune, I think the Nugents are dead that were so great at that game."

It was, therefore, with a lively heart that Arthur dressed (and sang) on the morning after his return home; stopping every now and then to look out over the fair Irish landscape that fronted his window, the lake and the hills that had been his friends from boyhood. Occasionally, too, he broke out into laughter.

"I and the telescope!" thought Dora, well able to

relish that joke.

Arthur at that moment wished no happier fate than to settle down on Irish soil with Kitty; and in the more

than cheerful mood in which he entered the breakfastroom Dora thought him even handsomer than his portrait.

Dora herself had spent a more or less wakeful night, for as her bedroom was just now her only place of solitude, she had to reserve her cogitations—her plannings and her plottings—for the hours when she was secure there. She had thought about everybody and everybody's She had thought about Trenchard, in whom she found herself exceedingly interested. She wondered what it was that occasioned him the mysterious trouble which his manner more than his words had hinted at. There was certainly something the matter with the gentle and the agreeable inspector. Then her thoughts reverted to herself and Arthur. What was she doing at Carriconna? How was her wonderful notion-wonderful chiefly in its vagueness, perhaps—of recovering all or some portion of her father's fortune to be carried out? She had already begun to think that she would not marry Arthur; though here she was not especially influenced by her cousin's very open demonstration of his regard for Lady Kitty. That young person, whom Dora really liked a little, she held to be of no importance whatever. No, she did not think that she would marry Arthur, but if she did not marry Arthur, what else should she do? "If I were to make myself known," she considered, "it would be equivalent to a direct demand upon Uncle Anthony to hand the fortune over to me. I don't think I could very well do that. Besides, I'm not at all sure that Uncle Anthony would return me the money if I He might, if he were very generously asked for it. inclined, tell me that I could stay here and take my share of it with him and the rest of the family. No, my position as Mrs. Lytton, an outsider, and a brilliant, an uncommonly brilliant, astronomer, is far better."

Anthony was rather silent until breakfast was half finished, but the circumstance did not fail to impress itself upon the rest of the company that he was wearing a new suit of clothes.

"His worship's in noble style this morning," said

Arthur. "You've been saving those for me, father,

I suppose."

"Why, no," said Anthony, "no." Then after a moment, "I must leave ye here to-day, all of ye. I'm going up to Dublin."

"And this the first day that Arthur's at home,"

exclaimed Barbara.

"I know, I know; but we'll be seeing a good deal of each other from now, I hope. And ye see I didn't know that he was coming, and I have a matter of business to settle with me solicitor."

"And what's that ye have beside ye, if I may make so

bold?" inquired his sister.

"A few things I'm to get in town, that's all," said Anthony, unfolding and glancing down a big sheet of paper, on which he had written out a score or two of items. "I leave ye in better hands than mine, Arthur, me boy. Get Mrs. Lytton to take ye up the tower and give ye just one lesson, and ye'll think that every day of your life has been wasted till now."

As he was driving out of the gate Anthony had a letter put into his hands by the postman. It was an Australian letter in the handwriting of his late brother's solicitor, and he put it in his pocket to read in the train. When there he opened and read it. The chief interest of the

letter was contained in the following sentences:

"The surprise you express at being left sole legatee is natural. I have learned only within the last few months that my late client, Mr. Kedagh Nugent, had a daughter living at the time when he made his will. But, as I am given to understand, his daughter married in direct opposition to her father's wishes, leaving Australia immediately afterwards with her husband. It is believed that they went to Europe, but none of their former friends have heard anything of her or of him since they quitted this country. The husband's name was Lytton, and that is really the only information I possess."

## CHAPTER XVII.

## MORE OF ANTHONY'S SURPRISE-

ANTHONY'S tardy brain did not at the first reading lay hold on any special meaning in this letter. But he was sufficiently impressed to read it a second and a third time. Then he began to be puzzled, and ended by being uncomfortably mystified.

Climbing slowly from inference to inference, Anthony at length satisfied himself that his brother's daughter was living, that she had run away with her husband to Paris, that her husband had died there, and that she herself was now at Carriconna.

When he had arrived at this point Anthony was fairly petrified.

Had his niece's coming been accidental, so to speak, on her part—a mere affair of chance? No, it could scarcely have been that. She must have known, or at all events have suspected, from the first, by whom she was being engaged. What had been her motive? Anthony's suspicions were fired in a moment. Was it her father's fortune that had lured Dora to Carriconna? What could it have been else? On the other hand, why go to work in such a crooked fashion? Anthony was bewildered, stupefied.

It was well that he had no companions in the railway carriage. The more he worried over the matter, the more excited he grew. He rolled about in his seat, he stamped on the floor, he got up and shook himself. A sudden greed of money, such as he had never felt before, gnawed at him. He made clutching motions with his hands, as though holding in them the gold itself. It had been easy to talk of responsibilities towards his niece while he felt certain that he had no niece at all. Now that she had appeared, now that she was actually an inmate of his house, and by her mere presence asserting her right to a share, his too-ready

generosity transformed itself into a fierce jealousy and

over-mastering desire to cling to the wealth.

Then, too, his position was not a fraudulent one. His fortune was not ill-gotten. What affair was it of his that Kedagh had chosen to disinherit his daughter? Anthony was his brother's heir by his brother's own choice. If Dora had been struck out of her father's will, in what way was Anthony to be blamed? Dora's father had doubtless had his reasons for his course.

Anthony's train went no faster than usual that day. but his thoughts were absorbing, and he was at Dublin before he had extricated himself from the maze into which his troubled speculations had led him. prospective delights of the day's shopping—where were they now? He had pictured himself visiting en roi this shop and the other, where he had been accustomed to make his inconsiderable purchases; and taxing the resources of those shops by his munificent commissions. He had thought how different the town itself would look to him on this occasion. He had fancied himself standing in the middle of Sackville Street, gloating over the thought that he could buy up everything around him. These splendid fancies were dashed, shattered and dissolved. He had hoped to pick up some old acquaintances and take them to dine with him. He slunk along the streets dreading to meet anybody. He felt as though he had been robbed of all his riches. He paid his visit to his solicitor, and made some half-dozen out of the score of purchases he had contemplated; then went and took a solitary lunch at an inferior hotel, and was ready to go home again.

Meanwhile it had been vaguely shaping itself in his mind that the knowledge he had thus strangely arrived at would be best in his own keeping. Along with this thought he considered how oddly it had chanced that the letter from Australia had been put into his hands on that particular morning, and in circumstances which enabled him to keep its contents to himself. But for his visit to Dublin he would have had his letter at the

breakfast-table, and Barbara would immediately have shared it with him.

Returning home in the train, he finally decided that the secret of the letter should be his own. Hard upon that decision he resolved that the letter itself had better be destroyed. He felt in his pocket for a match, although he knew quite well that he never carried such things. Then he took out the letter, tore it into small pieces, and scattered them along the line, at intervals of twenty yards or so.

But he was still undecided what course to adopt with regard to Dora herself. Of this only he was certain, that she must know no more than Barbara what curious intelligence her uncle had become possessed of respecting her.

John Maher drove him home, and cou'd not twist a word from him. At the "grand" gate Dora and Arthur were awaiting his coming. They were in animated talk, and Anthony observed them. On the instant his problem was solved. Dora should have her share in her father's fortune by marrying Arthur.

"I declare now ye're the best of friends already," exclaimed the cunning old man, his spirits recovered. "Didn't I know just how it would be!"

"But what'll I do with Kitty?" he thought, as he alighted from the car.

## CHAPTER XVIIL

### CROSS PURPOSES.

ARTHUR had not spent the day on the tower with Dora. He had come back from Africa as much in love with Kitty as ever, and had posted off to Doyne Abbey within an hour or two of his father's departure for Dublin. At that hour of the day Kitty was generally out riding, and I can't say why she had foregone her usual exercise that morning. Arthur at any rate made sure of finding her, and he was not disappointed.

She was cutting flowers in the great oblong pleasure ground, and had a basket half full on the ground beside her.

"You didn't see any roses like this in Africa, Arthur," she said, holding up a noble Duke of Edinburgh for him to smell.

"No, nor like this one either," said he, attempting to

take her face between his hands.

"Mamma is in the shrubbery," said her ladyship,

darting back.

"Still in the shrubbery!" exclaimed Arthur. "Why, she was in the shrubbery two years ago, when I came to say good-bye."

"She does a great deal of good to the shrubs," said Kitty; "and, Arthur, I don't believe mamma objects to

your coming home at all."

"You don't say so."

"Yes, I do. Oh, Arthur, isn't it magnificent to think

how rich you are?"

"It's the most elevating thought in the world, Kitty. I never felt so proud of myself before. The sun's awfully hot here; are there no blooms to cut in the rose garden?"

"Yes," said Kitty, "but mamma doesn't want them touched. But I'll tell you what, Arthur; Cassandra's got a lovely foal, and you might like to see that. She's

in the paddock."

The paddock was a good deal less shady than the garden, but Arthur said it was the very place, and towards the paddock they went.

"Kitty," said Arthur.

"Yes?"

"I have come on serious business."

"Gracious, Arthur!"

"Yes, I shall want some private conversation with mamma."

"Have you come for me, Arthur?"

"My lovely Kitty, do you think I have come for anybody else?"

"Arthur," she said, looking down with twinkling

eyes, "do you love me with a deep and an abiding love?"

"Kitty," replied Arthur in the same tone, "I do."

"Are you certain, Arthur, that no dusky beauty on

the golden sands of Africa-"

"My sweet, you are talking of what you know nothing about. There are not any beauties on the golden sands where I have been, dusky or otherwise."

"Then, Arthur, you have not been really tried."

"No, my darling, I have not."

"Still you don't feel the least doubt whatever in the deepest depths of your heart, Arthur, that you do really love me as—as I deserve to be loved?"

They were out of sight of the shrubbery, and the only window that overlooked them was a blind one; so Arthur seized Kitty as he had done the evening before, lifted her up and kissed her.

"There, miss," said he, "all future impertinences will

be visited in the same way. Is that the foal?"

"How can I see with my back to the paddock; turn me round at once."

"Kitty," said Arthur, "Barbara says she thinks we may have Gravelmount."

"But what does Mr. Astronomer think, Arthur?"

"He thinks of Jupiter; but I hope we shall bring him down to earth by-and-by."

"Arthur," said Kitty, "don't you think that Mrs.

Lytton is very pretty?"
"Very," said Arthur.

"And rather nice too?"

"Yes, and rather nice."

"Arthur, do you think persons ought to have clever wives?"

"How many of them?"

"Stupid! I mean do you think a person ought to have a clever wife."

"It depends a good deal on whether a person is a

clever person himself, I expect," said Arthur.

"Well now, Arthur, you are a person of some talent, you know."

"I am," said Arthur, "I am."

"Mamma has always admitted that about you, Arthur. Now what I want to know is, whether you ought to have a clever wife or not?"

"The cleverest wife for a husband is the wife he likes the best, my sweet; and that's all the answer you'll get. There's somebody calling you."

"Is it lunch time already?" said Kitty. "You'l

stay to lunch, Arthur, won't you?"

"I must," said Arthur.

"What do you mean by must, Arthur?"

- "Didn't I tell you that I had come upon a serious mission?"
- "But you can't launch out upon a serious mission at luncheon. Luncheon is mamma's favourite meal, and if you say anything to put her off her pet dishes she will never allow you near the place again."

"I have studied mamma during many years, Kitty,

and I am not going to commit myself now."

"Well, then, let's run, or you'll have committed yourself already, for there's no second bell for luncheon."

"Where's your flower basket, Kitty?"

"My flower basket? My flower basket?"

"Yes, where is it?"

"I must have left it in the garden."

"Very well, then; the moment luncheon is over you will go to look for it. No, you haven't time now; you will go directly after luncheon."

"Very well; if you promise me that mamma shall be

able to enjoy her lunch as she likes to do."

"I'll see she does that, Kit. Will you kiss me again?"

"If there's nobody looking, of course I will."

"There is nobody. Kitty, if I had expected all this I would have taken the fever two months earlier.

There's love for you."

"I'm glad you took the fever, Arthur, or you might never have come home at all. Look, there's mamma waving at us. Mamma's handkerchief is a peremptory signal; we had better run again." "What did ye eat in Africa?" said Lady Frayne after

grace.

"We missed a great chance once," said Arthur. "A friendly chief sent us a baked prisoner. He was black, or I think we might have ventured on him, for we had had bad sport and were very short of provisions. We never had sauce like this at any rate."

"Indeed, I'm sure ye didn't," said Lady Frayne. "I was three years inventing that sauce, and I'm not sure

that I've got it perfect yet."

"Mr. Nugent's gone to Dublin, mamma."

"The poor man," said Lady Frayne. "I hope he took the lady in the great hat with him; for I'm sure he's not fit to be his own keeper these times. I'm quite sorry for your father, Arthur, and 'twas a foolish thing of Kedagh to leave him all that money; and, pray, what are you going to be doing with yourself now?"

"Kitty, where's that flower basket?" asked Arthur

**su**ddenly.

Kitty had hardly had a mouthful, and her appetite was a healthy one; but there was no mistaking the covert glance which Arthur threw at her and she dropped her knife and fork and said:

"Oh, I must have left it in the garden, and the sun will ruin the roses. Mamma, I must run and get it this

minute."

"Ring the bell and let Wilson go for them," said Lady

Frayne.

"Wilson's getting so short-sighted he doesn't know a basket from a barrow," said Kitty as she vanished through the open window.

"What was it I was asking, Arthur? oh, yes, about

yourself?"

"Don't you think you might give me Kitty now, Lady Frayne?" said Arthur, making one dash for his point.

"I might what?" inquired Lady Frayne, feigning an

astonishment if she felt it not.

"You see, Lady Frayne," went on Arthur, "thers's really nothing that need stand between us now."

"And how do I know that, pray? I declare I don't think I'd give five years' purchase for the whole of your father's money. He has the best will in the world, I think, to make away with it before he knows rightly how much he has. Did he settle anything on you yet?"

"I only came home last night, you know, Lady

Frayne."

"To be sure. And your father away to Dublin this morning. I don't suppose, now, that you've had ten minutes' talk between you yet."

"Aunt Barbara thinks he'll buy Gravelmount for me."

"Oh ho! Don't ye think, Arthur, ye'd better wait

till ye hear what himself has to say about that?"

"But : uppose---"

"Well, now, what will I suppose? Suppose that your father behaves rationally, and he must be a changed man when he does that, then I'll hear what ye have to say again. Now, isn't that fair enough?"

"That's quite fair," said Arthur.

"Very well, then; go on with your lunch, or call Kitty in first, for hers is spoiling; she's a great little plotter, with her flower baskets."

"Well, what does mamma say?" inquired Kitty, as she was accompanying Arthur down the drive after

luncheon.

"Mamma is amiability itself; she only wants his wor-

ship to act reasonably."

"Oh, he must do that. I've told him already that it's the bounden duty of rich people to make everybody happy who isn't rich. And he always obeys me."

This was at about the time when Anthony was entering upon that train of reasoning which ultimately led him

to the conclusion that Kitty must be sacrificed.

Anthony had foreseen no occasion for speedy action, or for direct action of any sort in this matter. The most deliberate man in general, where his own affairs were concerned, he had not thought of Arthur scurrying over to Doyne Abbey after breakfast to lay himself and his proposals at the feet of Kitty's mother. Neither was he prepared to be tackled by Arthur that same evening

on the same subject. Arthur, however, as he has shown, was no laggard in love. Accordingly, when he and his father were alone, after the ladies had gone to bed, Arthur resumed operations.

They had been talking about the African expedition,

and Arthur said carelessly:

"His lordship made some suggestion that if he were to be much longer away, I might perhaps go out and rejoin him."

"And what do you think yourself, my boy?"

"I haven't thought about it at all, so far."

"To be sure not. You're only just home. And sure nobody's in a hurry to see your back again. Ye see, Arthur, me boy, Carriconna's no longer the place it was. I'm a great substantial man now, thanks to the goodness of your uncle; and I'll be doing this thing and the other by-and-by, and why shouldn't I have you at my elbow to help me?"

If Arthur felt any trepidation in approaching his father on the delicate subject in hand, Anthony on his side had thought it as well that Arthur—whose ridicule of, if not his opposition to, the astronomical project he had been rather in dread of—should be won over im-

mediately.

"Well, now, your worship," said Arthur boldly, perceiving his opening here, "why don't you fix me down in some handy place like Gravelmount, which is next door to us here, and then you'd have me nicely."

"Gravelmount? Gravelmount?" queried Anthony.
"What would I fix ye at Gravelmount for? Haven't

ye comfortable quarters where ye are?"

"At Gravelmount, your worship, I might take a wife, and that would fix me better than anything."

"Wife, what wife?" growled Anthony.

"There's a question," said Arthur; "Lady Frayne's ready to give me Kitty this minute."

"And who told you that, pray?"

"She told me herself. I lunched at the Abbey to-day."

"That's a great bounding way ye have, indeed. And

what part did I play in your arrangements with my lady?"

"Oh, your worship, we gave you the part of the benevolent father."

"I'll go bail ye did. But ye didn't take my counsel first."

"We took that for granted, your worship."

"Ye did, indeed. But, see here now, Arthur, my boy; I'm not too fond of a young man's marrying himself at your age. I was a good many years older than you before I ventured to make up to your mother. And Kitty, now; Kitty's barely out of her teens. I think Kitty would be all the better for a year or two more in the keeping of that fine shrewd woman her mother."

This bold harangue took Arthur somewhat by surprise. From what Aunt Barbara had told him, he had supposed that his father's mind had been more or less

attuned to Gravelmount and Kitty.

Apparently, however, Anthony's mind had not been properly prepared upon either of those subjects.

operly prepared upon either of those subjects.

Perceiving that his son paused, Anthony continued:

"My boy, I'd have you reflect about this enormous matter, and weigh it well in your mind. Do ye know anything about the stars, now? Do ye know how long

it would take to go from here to Jupiter?"

"Well, let me see now," said Arthur; "to Jupiter? It would depend, of course, on how you proposed to go. If you went by English express, sixty miles an hour say, I suppose it would take you about a thousand years; if you went on the old mare you would be longer, of course."

This was one for Anthony, who did not quite know

what to say next.

"I see," he said at length, "that you know something of astronomy, Arthur. 'Tis a tremendous great science. 'Tis a science that a person can never get to the end of. And I don't know that you could do a better thing at present, Arthur, than to go on with your studies in the company of my friend, Mrs. Lytton. My! my! but that's a powerful clever woman, and so amenable, too."

Arthur stared open-eyed at his father. What should this portend?

Anthony shifted uneasily under the gaze of his son.

"I shouldn't like, sir," said Arthur, "to step in between you and Mrs. Lytton. You see you are only just beginning the subject yourself. You'll want a great deal of Mrs. Lytton's time for the present."

"I will," said Anthony, "I will. For I believe that the stars are my vocation; but I wouldn't like to cut you off entirely from all that Mrs. Lytton could teach you. I tell ye now, Arthur, that when ye're learning under Mrs. Lytton, ye don't know that ye're learning at all, the way of her is so pleasant."

By the time his father had got to this point Arthur's mystification was measureless. The severe sobriety of Anthony's habits forbade any notion that his counsel was inspired by wine; but other explanation of these extraordinary utterances there was none.

"Upon my word, your worship," said Arthur, "I haven't the ghost of a no ion what you're driving at."

"Phew," said Anthony, "'tis not your African lingo I'm talking, but plain Irish."

"Well, then, in plain Irish," said Arthur, "what are your proposals about me? You talked just now of my staying at home to help you. I'm willing; though I'm not tired of roaming yet, and can forage for myself as I have done. But if I stay at home I must have Kitty. I talked in 'plain Irish' at the Abbey to-day, but, of course, if I have not your support, which, as things are, I thought I might have had, Kitty and I must wait till I can make my own independence."

"Gently, now, gently," said Anthony; "I'm not saying no to you. I'm only for bidding ye wait. Don't go scampering off in that way. You're very well at home here, and there'll be plenty for ye to do, and plenty for ye to eat. But take your time. Go easy; the Nugents must take things quietly and decently now. We'll be an example to the county. We'll walk soberly, we'll show no rashness at all to anybody. Buck went a great deal too fast. Buck was one of the family, my

boy, though you don't remember him. I am sorry Buck didn't go quieter; but he's dead, and we'll say no more about him. 'Tis your father, my boy, who must be a pattern to you now. Kitty's a good girl, and one of these days she'll make somebody a good wife; maybe 'twill be yourself, but don't be hurrying the poor child till she knows rightly what you're talking of leading her into."

Arthur smoked his last pipe alone. But on that evening he found no inspiration in tobacco. His father, if not opposed to his plans, seemed at any rate to have some mysterious purpose of his own that did not chime with them. What that might be Arthur did not divine. He laughed at Mrs. Lytton and astronomy, but he continued to be mystified. And as he went up to bed he could not but feel that Gravelmount seemed a trifle farther away than it had done at lunch time.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## CAPTAIN TRENCHARD'S SECRET.

Dora sat on the top of a hill overlooking the lake, and wondered whether she were the most foolish woman in the world. It was full afternoon, warm, with a tempering breeze from the glowing surface of the lake. With her instinctive habit of taking the best possible care of herself, she had found a spot where the sun and air combined to produce the happiest and most equable temperature, and was comfortably reclined against an oak tree well padded with ancient moss, which served the double purpose of a support for her back and a shade for her eyes. In the shimmering air the landscape spreading away beneath and around her was but dimly outlined, but Dora was not intent upon the landscape. She was thinking of herself and her affairs.

"What in the name of all that is absurd, am I going

to do here?" she said; "was there ever such a wild goose chase as mine from Paris to Carriconna?" She picked up a morsel of grey rock and sent it rolling down the hillside, idly watching it as it bounded over the uneven surface of the ground, its progress finally arrested

by a bush of furze.

"So!" said she, "I'm in a bush, too; happily for me, it isn't a prickly one. I wish I had a confidante. What an odd thing for me to wish. I have always hated confidentes. But I should like some one to tell me how stupid I am, and then to tell me what to do next. My cousin has a smattering of astronomy; he knows how long it would take to get to Jupiter. I hope his knowledge does not extend much further; it would be awkward if he were to catch me tripping, and really this handbook," giving a little contemptuous tap to the volume beside her, "doesn't carry me much beyond the point I arrived at in school. School! What a long journey backwards to school! Why, it seems centuries since I had my first love-letter from Alec, and that was years after the school-days. What do I want with Uncle Anthony's money? That's absurd—of course I want it. But can I get it—can I get any of it? I begin to think that a very impossible undertaking. I didn't come to steal bank notes, but it is quite certain that they will not drop into my hands. Que faire, donc? Arthur and I are not to marry each other. I think, and-"

A report which sounded like a pistol-shot echoed close at her ear. Another followed it almost immediately. Gun-shots or pistol-shots, in Ireland, have a peculiarly disquieting effect on the tympanum of a stranger. Dora shut her book with a snap and started up. There was nobody in sight. A third shot disturbed the quiet air. On the side of the hill facing the lake there was not a human creature visible; Dora turned about and glanced in the opposite direction. At the bottom of the hill on this side she saw her friend Mr. Trenchard with a pistol in his hand. Seeing her, he hastened up the hill.

"What is it?" said Dora in a frightened tone. "Are

you in danger?"

"I am the unluckiest and stupidest man in the world," said Trenchard, doffing his hat. "No, I am in no danger; I wish I had so good an excuse for frightening you."

"But what were you firing at?" said Dora.

"In effect, at nothing. The pistol is a hobby of mine. It stands me in the place of a dog on my rambles. You see," he said, holding out a very diminutive weapon, "it is not a formidable arm. I take random shots at anything non-human in my way. This is a trackless place, you know, Mrs. Lytton, and you are really almost the first person I have ever chanced upon on this hill."

"So much the better for les autres," smiled Dora.
"But I have frightened you at all events," he said.

"Not much; my nerves are pretty good. What a delightful little pistol! may I take it? It looks too small to do much mischief with. I wonder if you could really hit anything with it."

"You could kill with it if you used it properly," said

Trenchard.

"Really, really," said Dora. "Well, we won't kill anything, but see if——"

"Throw this up," said Trenchard, rolling up and handing her a paper pellet about the size of a marble.

Dora threw it as high as she could into the air, and Trenchard, aiming as it fell, blew it to a distance of several yards.

"That's capital," said Dora. "Now let me try."

"You couldn't do it, you know," said Trenchard. "It takes six months of practice."

"How do you know what practice I have had? Still, I don't think I could hit the pellet. What shall I fire at?"

"I'll put up my stick for you," said Trenchard, "and pronounce you a capital shot if you hit it at twenty-four feet."

"But what will you say for your stick if I do hit it?"

"Oh, you shall triumph over the stick if you can.

It's only an ash plant, you see. I cut it somewhere vesterday."

He drove the stick into the ground, and measured a

distance of twenty-four feet from it.

"Now take your own time," he said, but while he was speaking the words Dora fired, and a white mark appeared on the stick where the bullet had carried away a morsel of bark.

"Bravo!" said Trenchard; "splendid, indecd.

Where did you learn to be a marksman, pray?"

"A long way from here," said Dora, "if I ever learnt to be one at all, which, you see, I don't admit. But one learns many things in Austral——"

She stopped with the word on her lips, and looked at

him with an air half annoyed and half confused.

"In Australia?" said Trenchard innocently, and yet with surprise. "Have you been in Australia?"

Dora felt she had trapped herself. But her self-possession once regained she betrayed herself no further.

"I was there once, when a girl," she replied; "but

that is a long while ago."

She youchsafed no further information on this subject,

and Trenchard refrained from inquiry.

Trenchard's manner this afternoon was entirely different from what it had been on the evening when Dora and he met first. He was animated but without excitement; it was quite rational.

Dora did not fail to notice this, and she was still curious about the half mysterious introduction to a confession which he had made to her a day or two before.

"Have you been riding to day?" she asked.

"I rode for an hour before breakfast; an old habit of mine, but it has fallen into abeyance lately, with some more of my good habits."

"That's a sad admission," said Dora.

"Is it not? You, now, have no such admissions to make, I am sure."

"I might have, if I were candid enough; but I don't think I am very fond of confessing my shortcomings."

"Neither am I, I'm afraid, except in a general fashion. And when shortcomings pass into faults, and faults into worse, confession of any sort asks some heroism." "Doubtless," said Dora, "but"—with a smile—"are you glancing at me in these grave words, or reproaching yourself for some deed too dreadful to be uttered?"

"How is it possible that I should be glancing at you,

Mrs. Lytton?"

"Even so, you are not less enigmatical."

"A man who fails to be his own master," said Trenchard, after a pause, which was evidently painful to him, "who is crippled, weakened, degraded even, by some tyrannous and irresistible habit—how would you feel towards such a man?"

"You put an extreme case," answered Dora, her voice striving to express the sympathy she felt with what seemed like an effort on Trenchard's part to rid himself of some galling and even humiliating burden. "Complete mastery of self; which of us can boast of that? A habit that wackens and degrades—well, I do not know, but I fancy I would rather kill myself than live enslaved to that. It would be a choice between two crimes."

"Yes," said Trenchard, "such a habit as I speak of

is a crime too. Assuredly it must be."

"Against oneself—against one's better self," Dora hastened to say; and went on, "But when a habit brings one to this pass, surely one must find some combative resources within oneself! We should not relinquish our hold on our higher selves until every force for good in us is exhausted."

"The worst is," said Trenchard, "that those forces in us for good exhaust themselves silently and by little, before our knowledge is fully awakened to the fact that

they are failing us."

"That may certainly be, to some extent; to a great extent even," said Dora. "But the note of warning is always sounded, and we are only deaf to it in so far as we choose to be. Is not that so?"

"Yes," answered Trenchard. "We are to blame at

the first, no doubt."

"But," said Dora, "we are, as I have said, discussing an extreme case. No friend of mine, I hope, is at this extremity." "Perhaps not quite; but some of us arrive without knowing it. I was reading last night a book on opium and opium-eating. I would rather be a drunkard than an opium eater; the case of the latter, when it has gone to extremities with him, seems to be all but hopeless. Years ago I read the 'Confessions' of De Quincey on this subject, and thought there must be more of the imaginative than of the actual in the torments he describes. But I know now that 'the pains of opium' are terrible beyond words. Oh! the dreadful struggle to come out of the tomb of opium! It is a terrible book that I was reading last night."

"Opium!" said Dora within herself, and a little shudder seized her as she added: "Is he an opium eater?" She was thinking of the case of an opium eater whom

her husband had had under treatment in Paris.

Her tone had changed when she replied to Trenchard:

"The opium eater is a slave indeed. I knew one once, and there is no bondage like it. You speak rightly of the 'tomb' of opium, but to be an opium eater is not to be a criminal, nor necessarily a depraved and vicious person. There is more of sickness than of vice in it."

"You say that?" said Trenchard, and he could not

repress an eager note in his voice.

"Certainly I do," answered Dora. "Opium eating is only one form (though, in aggravated cases, the worst form) of narcomania. Excuse that tremendous word—I have had some practical experience of medicine. Well, narcomania is almost always a purely physical disease. Confirmed drunkards—I don't care whether they are whiskey drinkers or opium eaters—are as genuinely sick people as if they were suffering from typhoid fever or consumption. Let us bring the matter home to ourselves. You or I might be riding over this hill to-morrow, and, if the horse stumbled, be pitched off head-foremost. It might follow from that accident that, if the brain were injured in a certain way, you or I might—from no fault of yours or mine, but from a purely physical cause—become a confirmed drunkard in six months from now."

"But surely not if the will were set against it?

Trenchard spoke eagerly, and his face had a very keen, and even a wistful look.

"You might as well say," returned Dora, "that a person who was peculiarly sensitive to face-ache could exert his will against an attack of neuralgia whilst standing in a violent draught. In certain circumstances, the will has no more to to do with inebriety than a private soldier on active service has to do with the ordering of a battle."

"You talk like a seer," said Trenchard. "These are not the world's views on inebriety, of whatever kind."

"No," answered Dora; "these are not the world's views on inebriety, but I do not talk like a seer either. As I said, I have had some experience of medicine. My husband was a physician, and one of the cleverest of his day. I am talking not my views but his, and those of the men who practise medicine as science teaches them."

"But the world's view?"

"What does the world know about it? The common opinion of the world is as backward as it used to be about the lunatic. Is it so many years since insanity was everywhere regarded as a direct visitation from God? If the maniac lived after he had been whipped or pumped upon for a month or two he was considered cured. The church and the world have the same notions about the inebriate—only rather worse, perhaps —that they used to have about the madman. We don't chain the madman up nowadays and beat him or souse him; but we make a pariah of the drunkard if he is a gentleman, and a criminal of him if he is not. But inebriety is not less a disease with a physical basis than insanity; and what is more, they are sister diseases. father was one of the soberest of men; but if he had had an inebriate tendency before I was born, he might have transmitted it to me, and I should then have come into the world with a physical propensity to inebriety, just as -by heredity—thousands of people are born with the germs of insanity or consumption."

"You should be in parliament, Mrs. Lytton."

"What could I do there? There are some people in

parliament who know a great deal more about this matter than I do; but parliament itself is only as wise as the constituencies, and that, I am afraid, is not saying very much. You remember what Mr. Bumble said about the law?"

"What hope is there, then, for the poor inebriate?"

"He must wait, I'm afraid. His time will come. I hope that you and I will live to see the day when the regular drunkard, knowing that he is the victim of a disease, will be able to tell his friends that he is going to the hospital to be cured, with as little feeling of shame as consumptives have in saying that they are ordered to Madeira."

"Would that that day were come!" said Trenchard with a sigh. "But," added he in an altered tone, "this is a sorrowful discourse for such a scene. Have you explored about here at all, Mrs. Lytton? There is an old fort of Cromwell's within a quarter of a mile, shall I show it to you?"

"Another day, if you will be so kind. I think I must go back in search of my pupil. By the way "—as if this were a careless after-thought—"will you be good enough not to remember for the present that I have been in Australia?"

Trenchard bowed in response to this request as they shook hands. After doing this, however, he walked with her to the foot of the hill, and there they parted.

"I have got Mr. Trenchard's secret, I am sure," thought Dora as she walked home. "He is a narco-maniac."

# CHAPTER XX.

### A TELL-TALE TELESCOPE.

THEY were finishing luncheon at Carriconna a few days later, when the slow roll of wheels on the drive and the

excited voices of the domestics announced the arrival of the telescope.

Anthony, who had come in late to luncheon, pushed his plate away as if gooseberry tart were a thing of no consequence.

"Can't you let the men take the thing out of the cart

and finish your luncheon quietly?" said Barbara.

"No, I cannot," retorted Anthony; "what would the likes of them know of the way a telescope should be handled?"

"Well, indeed, I hope you're able to instruct them yourself," said Barbara. "Mrs. Lytton, my dear, don't you be hurrying away till you've finished."

"Oh, I've done," said Dora; "and don't you want to

see the telescope too, Miss Nugent?"

"Well, if I don't see it before ye've mounted it on the tower, I'll likely never see it at all," answered Barbara,

"so I suppose I must go too."

"Come along, then," said Arthur, following his father to the hall door where Anthony was already divesting himself of his coat and rolling up his sleeves as if an oak were to be felled.

"Now take care what you're doing there, boys, 'tisn't crockery ware you've got in there, nor flower pots—ye never saw the likes of what's in that case. Easy now, John Maher, don't be jerking it that way; take a hold of it there, beside him, Arthur; Mrs. Lytton, would ye just put the tip of yer finger there, above John Maher's ear, to steady the case, and ye may tweak the man's ear if he moves an inch. Barbara, will ye go to the horse's head; now just as gently as if it was whiskey with a loose bung to it. There, now, that's just the way. But I'm sure ye'd have had it shivered in pieces if I hadn't been beside you. 'Tis no great weight after all, I believe. Mrs. Lytton, shall we open it here or have it into the house; or get the case up to the tower as it is?"

"We may just as well open it here, I think. It's not

so heavy at all, you see."

"Well, now, I'll untie these ropes myself, and let some one go get a chisel and a screw-driver."

"I hope there's no sin in it anyway," said John Maher as he dispatched himself on this errand. "But I don't hould with them clever things at all. Sorra ha'porth more light there'll be about the place to-morrow than to day. I'll not look through it meself, I'm sure; I'm not for prying after the saints till I'm sent to join them."

By the time the chisel and screw-driver were found and brought, Anthony had the cords of the packing case unfastened, and when the lid of the deal case was taken off, the gay mahogany case of the telescope was

brought into view.

"Isn't that a picture of a case?" said Anthony, passing his fingers gingerly over it. "Now give me a hand to lift it out; fetch a rug from the hall, John, and spread it on the grass there. Here's the key, I suppose. Isn't that a sweet, beautiful key? Oh, my, my, see that!" he exclaimed as he unlocked the box and the polished brass instrument was seen within. "Now, Mrs. Lytton, not a hand but yours must have the lifting of it."

"Well, I am really afraid," said Dora, "that in that case it must stay where it is. You take it just there, Mr. Nugent; and, Mr. Arthur, you give a hand here; it's not china, you know. So! Now, John, lift out the stand and set it up there. Are we to mount it at once,

Mr. Nugent?"

"Not at all," said Anthony. "I'll wait till I get it upon the tower where I can have a good bold sweep."

"But Aunt Barbara's never going up the tower at

all," said Arthur.

"No, that she's not," answered Barbara.

"Well, sure, we can fix it up here for a minute, and Barbara may take stock of the heavens where she stands," said Anthony. "There's sun enough at present to make a decent show for her. Will you take a look at the sun, Barbara, my dear?"

"I'm not one bit curious about it," said Barbara; but set the thing up and I'll put my eye to it for

once."

"That's the shabbiest word about the sun I ever heard, and I declare, I wouldn't have ye look at all, Barbara, only to hear how differently you'll speak when vou've seen it."

The telescope being mounted and pointed, Barbara was for taking possession of the eye-piece immediately, but Dora and Arthur both exclaimed against her.

"Stop, Miss Nugent!" exclaimed Dora.

"You'd have been stone blind in another second," said Arthur.

"I haven't put on the dark glass," explained Dora. "This is it, I think. Nobody dare look at a sun like that without the protection of the dark glass. Now you may look, Miss Nugent."

Miss Nugent took her place in front of the telescope and was silent for a moment or two, the others standing around in expectation; Anthony tapping the ground impatiently, and his features twitching with excitement.

"Well, but where's the sun?" exclaimed Miss Nugent at length, looking up from the telescope into the heavens

to make sure that the orb was still there.

"Oh, wirra! wirra! listen to her," cried Anthony.

"Why, you were looking straight up at it, Miss

Nugent," said Dora.

"Sure, I saw nothing but a dirty yellow little thing as like a mustard plaister as anything I ever looked at, and spots on it too, I declare."

Anthony's breath was taken from him; he had no word to say in reply. But he took the place at the instrument vacated by his sister and directed his glance upwards.

"Well, your worship," said Arthur, "how does it

strike you?"

"Well, 'tisn't quite so clear as I'd have supposed," replied Anthony slowly: "but 'tis just as I thought: we're too far off away down here; we'll see something different on the tower."

"One has to get used to looking at the sun through a telescope," said Dora, beginning to feel that science and she, as its exponent, must assert themselves or suffer some loss of dignity in Anthony's estimation. "Now, Mr. Nugent, I'll take off the sun glass, and you shall see how far you can range landwards. There's a nice opening through those trees. Have you got the right focus?"

"I'll see, I'll see," said Anthony, who, disguise it as

he might, was evidently disappointed with the sun.

The telescope being lowered and pointed between the trees, and the dark glass removed, he took his place again. From this point the telescope commanded a remote corner of the Bog of Carriconna, about two miles and a half away, and visible to the eye only as a dull brown patch on the horizon.

As he looked in this direction, Anthony's gaze be-

came absorbed.

"Is it focussed rightly?" asked Dora. But Anthony vouchsafed no reply save an impatient wave of the hand. The movements of his back and his head expressed a lively emotion.

"By the powers!" he burst out at length.

"A heifer in the bog?" suggested Arthur.

"And who's that with him, now?" Anthony said presently. "A little fellow with a stoop. 'Tis Mickey Flinn, as I'm a Protestant! Oh, ho, Ned Curtis and Mickey Flinn, me fine boys, yourselves wont bless the day I got me telescope."

"Turf-stealing, your worship?" said Arthur.

"And two carts with them, I declare. Oh, my! see that now. There's Paddy Tuite coming up with a third. 'Tisn't above six weeks since I let Paddy off with the half of his rent. I'd give a hundred pounds this minyut if I could let them know I'm covering them with me eye. Whoop! whoo-oop!" and Anthony, without taking his eye from the telescope, bawled at the top of his voice, forgetting that the thieves were two miles and a half away.

Suddenly remembering this, he started up and let go

of the instrument.

"'Tis a great machine for this world, anyway," said he. "Take care of it, now, while I'm gone; I'll be up with those chaps before they're home with those loads."

And offering no further explanation, he started off at full speed in the direction of the bog.

"Astronomy's not in it at all, Mrs. Lytton," said

Arthur with his genial laugh.

Dora was thinking the same thing, but the reflection not being altogether a palatable one to her, she made no reply.

## CHAPTER XXI.

#### A CHANGE OF POLICY.

A FORTNIGHT passed. It was full summer, and the weather of an unimpeachable perfection. It was delicious to wake in the morning and throw open the window against the lake, and smell the clear and pungent air, and bathe head and arms in the sunshine. Carriconna was pre-eminently an abode for the summer, when there was cheer of sunlight to soften the crude harsh lines of the old house and warm its chill interior. One should have lived at ease and mirthfully at Carriconna those July days; existence should have been all jocund. But it was not exactly so. Some sort of change that was more to be felt than observed had been, and was, in progress within the household. had been very gradual, and dated back not farther than the period of Arthur's arrival. Its effects were visible first in Anthony himself. Anthony was clearly undergoing a species of transformation. The reader knows more on this subject than was known, as yet, to Anthony's fellow-inmates at Carriconna. Their knowledge was limited to the obvious fact that Anthony was not what he had been (in manner, bearing, or speech) even so recently as two weeks earlier. The truth is Anthony was growing more and more perturbed about Dora. It was by this time as clear as possible to him that the runaway daughter of his late brother and the handsome and charming young widow to whom he was paying a salary of a hundred a year, to enlighten him on matters celestial, were one and the same individual. And the more he dwelt upon it the more perplexing and threatening did the situation appear. There was a sort of humour in it, to be sure, but it was not the humour of the situation with which Anthony's positations were acquired.

which Anthony's cogitations were occupied.

His own niece—for Anthony no longer doubted that he was Dora's uncle—sitting at his elbow at meal times, and giving him sedate lessons in astronomy; addressing him as "Mr. Nugent," her aunt as "Miss Nugent," and her cousin as "Mr. Arthur," and never permitting herself the slightest familiarity with any of them: it was humorous in a manner, no doubt; but the joke did not appeal to Anthony. For Anthony was quite resolved that his niece was playing this clever part of hers with a very definite end in view, whatever that end might be. But as to that end, could there be any reasonable doubt about it in Anthony's mind? Whatever the means by which she proposed to attain it, Anthony was sure enough that the "end" itself was the fortune which Dora's father had willed away from her.

Anthony was fond of Dora, but once assured that she and he were in the lists together here, his fondness began to be tempered by his exceeding unwillingness to let go of the money bags. He did not want now to lose his grip upon a single one of them. Those beautiful sentiments which he had uttered in perfect good faith to his sister about the duty of sharing with Kedagh's daughter-Kedagh's daughter being more probably dead than living—had melted as the lake mists melted at breakfast time, under the conviction that Kedagh's daughter was much more probably living than dead. And Anthony had to be so secret about it all. dared not breathe a word to Barbara or to Arthur. course that conscience whispered him would be thrust upon him by those two in the very hour that he made them the partners of his knowledge. Barbara would insist upon Dora's receiving her portion; Arthur would not

be backward in seconding his aunt; and both would take Anthony's concurrence as a matter of course. They would strip him of a full half of his goods on the instant.

Anthony recoiled before the dreadful prospect; hugging his cheque book closer to him; gloating in fancy over the rich pile at the bank. Dora, without doubt, had a scheme of her own; let her begin to put that in operation, and Anthony would like nothing better than to match himself against his niece in a struggle for the ownership of that enchanting pile. Sometimes he was half inclined to bring Dora on to the ground at once, face her with the discovery he had made and demand of her what sort of claim she imagined hers to be. But he was never long in this mood; his intense curiosity to see how Dora herself would go to work barred him from any approach on these lines. Anthony accordingly was mum: but his mumness was visible. He wrapped himself up in secrecy and silence, but both his secrecy and his silence laid him open to the misgivings and the suspicions of those about him. There had been no silence and no secrecy between Anthony and his sister in the old days. All the goings and comings of the brother had been known to the sister. There had been perfect openness and sincerity between them on all Suddenly Anthony buttoned up his speech, as he was, in fact, beginning to button very closely the pocket that held his cheque book. He became a man of mystery, uncommunicative, and with leanings to churlishness. Towards Dora only his manner was in no way different from what it had always been.

The chief expression of Anthony's new manner was a negative one. He ceased to revel in talk of extravagant expenditure. He almost ceased to talk about his money at all. No more spendthrift visions entertained or alarmed the table. It might have been the impecunious Anthony of days gone by, who now sat severe at meals and scanned the dishes as the covers were lifted from them, to be sure that the cook was not wasting the re-

sources of the home farm.

A vague uneasiness and distrust were visible everywhere; Anthony's mood reflected itself all around him. Barbara had discovered that he was not, at present at all events, to be brought to reason respecting the affair of Arthur and Kitty. Upon this topic Anthony was as evasive and as chary of conversation as on any other. A direct answer was not to be drawn from him. All he could be got to say was, "There's time enough. I'll have the Nugents act like rational creatures now. We've been too head-long ever since we were a family. We'll go easy for the future, and make no show of ourselves."

Barbara argued with him and Barbara upbraided him;

but Anthony's obstinacy was a gift of nature.

His attitude on this matter did not improve the relations between himself and Arthur, though there was nothing that could be called unpleasant on either side. Anthony was always a man of humours, but humour succeeded humour with him, and it was an experience of the family that the humour which had sway for the time being had best be left to exhaust itself. There was, however, an ugly and depressing shadow athwart those sun-illumined July days.

Arthur began to wish, for Kitty's sake, that he had been something less bold and hasty in that semi-official visit to her mother, which of course had resulted in placing the sweethearts on quite a new footing. Lady Frayne was now for the first time openly tolerant of their relations, and their troth was considered to be now

as good as plighted.

"If he goes on behaving in this outrageous way I shall do something to his telescope," said Kitty, when Arthur was rowing on the lake one morning after breakfast.

"If you do that we shall have Mrs. Lytton down on us too; and then where shall we be?"

"I don't believe she cares a bit about the old thing."

"Oh, doesn't she though? I tell you I'm sure she's dreadfully vexed that the pupil doesn't make more progress. He's not half so keen about the stars since he found out that the telescope is a first-rate detective for

the estate. You should see him up on the tower now, ranging the fields and the bog. He'll be the terror of the neighbourhood by-and-by. Poor Mrs. Lytton will come in for some opprobrium, too, I'm afraid; she'll be regarded as the evil genius of the big spying-machine. I think the old boy will have to pull his tower down, or have it pulled down for him one of these days if he doesn't take care. I expect to hear of some priest denouncing the telescope in chapel before long."

"Your father is becoming a wicked man, I'm certain," said Kitty; adding ruefully in confirmation of this painful conviction, "He doesn't think a bit about you and me any more. And—oh! the unfaithful man—why, I remember that when I helped him to draw up his ridiculous advertisement for the newspapers he as good as promised that as soon as you came home he would 'set us up.' Instead of setting us up, he has

gone and set his face against us."

"Don't be too hard on the old gentleman, Kit. He's not at all himself just now, but he'll wheel about presently, and behave himself sensibly. Don't you be frightened, Kit."

"Shall we make mamma go and say something awful

to him, Arthur?"

"N—no," said Arthur, "I don't think we'll do that," remembering of old what execution her ladyship's artillery was capable of; "at least not just yet. We might make a call on mamma's energies later, other resources being exhausted."

"I should like mamma just to shake him up a little, Arthur. Mamma's wonderfully strong at that, you

know."

"There's no denying that," said Arthur. "What I'm doubtful about is, how that sort of treatment would answer. I never knew a man take less kindly to shaking than his worship. You shake a medicine-bottle, now, and the sediment that rises is the best part of it—at least, that's what the doctors say. But shake my father, and the best of him goes plumb to the bottom. That's the odd thing about my father."

"Then perhaps mamma had better not shake him, Arthur."

"Better not, dear, I think. Aunt Barbara's the doctor for him. If Aunt Barbara can't bring him round, nobody can—not even Mrs. Lytton."

"By the way," exclaimed Kitty, "do you know that Mr. Trenchard thinks Mrs. Lytton the loveliest woman he ever saw. He told mamma so."

"I don't care tuppence," said Arthur. "Trenchard, or anybody else, is welcome to think that."

"Don't you like Mrs. Lytton, Arthur?"

"Haven't a thought in the world about her," returned Arthur promptly. "Now if Trenchard took to saying that about you, I should want to know what he meant by it."

"Oh, I don't expect him to say it about me," she answered, trailing the white fingers of one hand in the cool waters of the lake. Then she looked up at Arthur, and all her sweet little face dimpled with laughter.

"But he ought to say it after all, you know," said

Arthur.

"He can't say it about ever so many people at once, and we don't really want him to, do we?"

"No, my beautiful, we don't," said Arthur contentedly. "I want nothing in the wide world outside this boat."

Dora's peace of mind was not like this. Dora was beginning to wonder whether she were in any way concerned in Anthony's change of front. On one point, indeed, she had no cause of alarm. She would have been greatly disturbed if Anthony had gone on with that reckless policy about which he talked so much and so largely during her first days at Carriconna. But Anthony was beginning to tighten his purse-strings even before he had fairly loosened them. That was very good from Dora's point of view; for while back it had seemed as though the fortune would be scattered before Dora, or anybody else except Anthony himself, could lay a finger on it. But Anthony was giving her fresh

cause for trouble now. He was dreadfully backward in his studies, and worse than that it was as though he were beginning to lose relish for them. This circumstance, combined with his increasingly parsimonious tendency, made Dora think it not impossible that Anthony might at any moment dispense with her services, in which event her position would be more desperate than ever. Dora, of course, knew nothing of the real drift of Anthony's present conduct. She did not, and she could not, imagine that Anthony's dearest wish at this time was to see his son and his niece in love with one another, and that nothing was further from his thoughts than any scheme which would involve Dora's withdrawal from Carriconna. Dora knew something more than Anthony knew, and Anthony knew a good deal more than Dora knew; but failing a confession on one side or the other, both must continue to work, more or less, at cross purposes.

As for Arthur's marrying Dora, no one knew better than she the unlikelihood of a settlement of affairs in that direction. In fact, during the very short time they had been under the same roof, an antipathy, which neither had uttered, nor in any way expressed, but which both were distinctly conscious of, had established itself between them. Dora knew, moreover, that Arthur was

all Kitty's.

"Well, then, all things considered, must I not do something desperate?" said Dora. She was seated on a ruined tombstone on a little old disused Roman Catholic cemetery in a boreen, or by-road, not a mile from the house. It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening and Dora was out for the after-dinner stroll which had become a habit with her since the first days of her sojourn at Carriconna.

"A nice pass I should be at, if I had to leave here! I could support myself on my wits, I suppose, but I've no fancy to do that. And a beautiful opinion I should have of myself for the rest of my life, if I went away and left behind me everything that ought in the commonest justice to be mine. Yes, mine—of course! The fortune

belongs to me—morally to me. Morally is a good word; I wonder what Uncle Anthony would say to it? Never mind Uncle Anthony; I don't fancy he's very likely to help me. How then can I help myself? How can I get the fortune?"

She sank into absorbed thought; her great soft eyes, that looked so perfectly good, fixed on the far sky, whose sunset colours had almost paled. Her fingers plucked nervously at the ribbons of her dress; long, energetic fingers with nails of exquisite shape, and the veins of the hand streaking the delicate skin. Fingers that should be deft at all work requiring a fine and accurate touch.

"That seems the only resource," she said presently, thus summing up and bringing to the point of decision the thoughts she had been busy with during her silence. "And I am disposed to venture it. I will venture it." Her gaze came back from the horizon to her hands, which were now fast clenched in her lap. "I believe that, given the opportunity—and opportunities can always be made—I can do it easily. As for the cost—well, I'm not eager to count that yet. After all, am I not a Nugent, too? Anthony could do nothing."

These dark speculations were here interrupted by a rude though slight accident. Dora received a light blow on her hand, and a stone rolled from her hand into her lap. A morsel of unclean paper was tied with a

worsted thread around the stone.

Dora, rather in a fright, pulled the paper off and smoothed it out. At the top of it was a drawing of what purported to be a telescope, and these words underneath, written in very faint ink, and by a hand that had not often held pen:

"See now, me ladi from Parris, that telscope is doin' a Power of harm abouts here, an' the sooner it's away the Better."

Dora was really frightened now. She was two-thirds of a mi'e from home, and the spot was lonely and en-

tirely deserted. The hand that had thrown the stone into her lap could not be very far away. She trembled all over, and scarcely dared to look around. Would she be waylaid as she went home? Though vague, the communication seemed to imply a threat. Dora was bewildered as well as frightened. She was not a coward. however, and quite realized that whether or no there were an ambush in waiting for her, she could not sit all night on the tombstone. Assuming a little more bravery than she felt, she got up and went to the broken iron gate of the cemetery, and looked out thence with an air of great unconcern. The high hedges of the boreen prevented her from seeing far; and within the range of her vision neither man nor beast was visible. Then she reflected on the improbability that any bodily hurt was intended her, and set out boldly to walk home. Night was coming on, but it was yet far from dark, and once outside the cemetery with a good stretch of lane before her and no apparent danger, Dora quickly plucked up her spirits. But before she had gone a hundred yards she was startled again by the sound of horses' hoofs pressing the soft and grass-grown track. hoofs were behind her, and thinking that if harm were approaching it were just as well to see it coming, she turned about in the middle of the boreen and stood still. A horse cantered up, and at a distance of twenty vards Dora recognized her friend Mr. Trenchard. sudden sense of relief made her heart bound, and though she scarcely knew it, her face was aglow with pleasure as the inspector drew rein beside her.

"Is it really you?" she said. "I never was so glad

to see a friend before."

Trenchard perceived that there was something more than compliment in this and said:

"It is I, certainly; is anything the matter? You are

trembling, Mrs. Lytton. What has happened?"

"I have had a fright, that's all," answered Dora.
"Look at this. Is there light enough to read it? A stone with that thing tied round it, was thrown at me just now in the cemetery there."

Trenchard took the paper from her hand and glanced it over.

"Did you see any one?" he said, when he had read it.

"No, I was too frightened to look at first, and I haven't seen anybody since. What is it? Is it a threatening letter? Fancy anybody threatening me on account of that ridiculous telescope."

"I am sorry," said Trenchard folding the paper, but without returning it to Dora. "It's the affair of the

turf-stealing, eh?"

"I suppose so," said Dora; "but rather hard on me, isn't it?"

"Mr. Nugent settled that matter with the men him-

self, didn't he?"

"Yes; he did nothing at all but threaten them. But I hear that everybody has been talking about it, and the people think they are watched now night and day."

"I'll keep the paper," said Trenchard; "don't be

frightened about it at all."

"But what will you do?" asked Dora. "I can't have the telescope bringing trouble upon all my friends; I'll break it sooner. And you know, Mr. Trenchard, you were fired at once."

"How do you know that?" said Trenchard.

"Oh, I know it quite well. And you can't think that I should like you to be made a target of a second time

on my account."

"But that sort of thing comes in my day's business, you know. Now," added he, "the proper thing for me to do would be to ride at once for the cabins of Mickey Flinn and Ned Curtis, for it is quite possible that I might overtake one or both of those gentlemen on an evening stroll. But to do that I should have to ride straight away from you, and, with your leave, I have not the least intention of doing that."

Trenchard, who had already dismounted, laid his hand

on the bridle.

"Well," said Dora, "I am not going to refuse your escort to-night. Thank you very much. But my evening rambles are spoilt now; isn't that sad?"

"To be in the fashion," said Trenchard, "you ought to let me furnish you with a couple of constables."

"I'll go back to Paris before I let you do that," she

laughed.

"Don't go back to Paris," said Trenchard.

"I don't want to."

At the gate of Carriconna Trenchard said:

"I do not want you to feel alarm, and I don't think you need; but don't go out alone in the evening just at present."

"Very well, I won't; but you must make a promise that if you are going to make any use of that paper you

will keep a good look out behind the hedges."

Trenchard smiled, but the pressure of his hand was rather close.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ANTHONY IS MYSTERIOUS.

THE Irish autumn was sultry, and the domestic atmosphere of Carriconna was sultry too. The air without was difficult to breathe, and there was no free breathing within.

Anthony had become a sore trial. He was obviously not on good terms with himself, and he was on very indifferent terms with other people. His tenants had begun to regard him with extreme suspicion. Hitherto there had been a kind of rough familiarity between the occupants and the owner of the Carriconna estate; for if politics can by any means be kept apart, as once they could be, the attitude of the Irish tenant towards a landlord whose grandfather and great-grandfather have held the acres before him, is very much that of the unlettered, faithful Russian peasant towards the Czar; an attitude in which affection mingles with respect and reverence.

Whilst a poor man, Anthony had been an exemplary landlord in the popular sense of the words, which means

that he had never been hard upon them for the "rint." He knew, I suppose, that the land no longer yielded what it had done in the days when there was money to spend upon it, and having narrowed his own expenditure within the limits of the merely nominal income which his estate had yielded, he had grown content with a poverty which in Ireland is never considered humiliating, if there be real gentility behind it.

And even now it was not Anthony the landlord, so much as Anthony the astronomer, betwixt whom and his tenants a gulf of mutual distrust began to disclose itself. Anthony had always enjoyed a more or less uncanny reputation among his people. He was a man of irregular, solitary and ungenial habits. People going home late at night met him on the hill-sides and on the roads. In trivial dealings with his tenants he had often shown himself suspicious and distrustful. He was a man jealous of gossip about himself, and once took an odd whim of sending his Catholic servants to chapel under the escort of a policeman in order that he might know they did not talk too much with other people.

But Anthony the astronomer, who could sit on his tower and be cognisant of the little peccadilloes of persons miles away from him, was a man to be held in mortal dread. The discovery of the turf-stealing being noised abroad, not a man or gossoon on the estate felt himself safe from the eye of Anthony seated behind the eye of the telescope.

And Anthony had quite sufficient keenness of wit to perceive that there was a strain between the house and its dependants. This did not sweeten his temper. Much the reverse; it encouraged a moroseness in him towards his tenants as a body.

Nor were his relations much more cordial within doors. But the mysterious habits of Anthony were the chief source of perplexity and disquietude at present.

In the first place, he had taken to haunting the tower after nightfall as if he were his own, or some ancestral, ghost. It was not astronomical business that took him there in the after-dinner hours, for Mrs. Lytton was not

asked to accompany him, as she invariably was when the stars were in question. And as nobody ventured to accompany Anthony when he gave it to be known that he wished no companion, nobody had any clue to the meaning or intent of these new nocturnal prowlings. Sometimes he would be in or about the tower for halfan-hour after dark, sometimes for an hour or more. Occasionally when he returned he bore with him stains of masonry or moss, as if he had been groping about in the tower or its precincts on his hands and knees. when inside he always locked the tower door behind him. John Maher knew this if nobody else did, for on one occasion curiosity had overborne his fears and he had tried the handle. The lock on the door was a new and special one, recently added by Anthony's orders, and there were only two keys. Anthony had one of these and Mrs. Lytton the other; but for the reasons already stated, Mrs. Lytton's possession of the duplicate key had not hitherto unlocked for her whatever secret -if there were any at all—the tower contained for Anthony. The keys he excused on the ground that as the telescope had become an object of hostile interest to some of his tenants it would be just as well that no unauthorized person should have any opportunity of access to the tower.

Another cause of uneasy interest to his family was furnished by the periodical journeys which Anthony was making to Dublin at this time; journeys which had no ostensible motive, and on which Anthony offered no further enlightenment than that "he had a power of things to attend to."

Odd, too, it was, that the large old portmanteau, which always went very light with Anthony on the up journeys, invariably returned very heavy. He always lifted it off the car himself, and very carefully; but there was no doubt as to its weight.

Anthony never unlocked the bag downstairs, nor were its contents ever shown to any one; but he had been seen bearing small burdens of some sort to the tower, wherein, presumably, he deposited them; though no

tokens of any addition to the meagre contents of that place were ever visible. Nor, indeed, so far as could be seen, did the tower contain a secret hold of any description for the stowage of any description of goods. It was an affair of mystery from beginning to end, and Anthony was an affair of mystery himself.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### A BROKEN HEAD.

MATTERS were at this pass when a night of drenching rain succeeded to the sultry evenings of a fortnight.

It was about half-past nine, and the Carriconna household would soon be thinking of bed. Arthur was dining (and doubtless plotting) at Doyne Abbey. Anthony, buried in meditations and his own leathern chair, was vexing his soul with speculations as to what might happen if he were to give everybody notice to quit, and import a new set of tenants from somewhere else. Every now and then, without lifting his head, deep sunk on his chest, he raised an eyelid and peered curiously at Dora, who was absorbed in an old manuscript book she had discovered in the music-stand, wherein was set forth the genealogy of the Nugent family. Dora did not know how curiously Anthony was watching her, nor if she had known would it have mattered; for how could she have guessed what questions Anthony was asking himself as to her study of the family tree? Now and again she questioned Miss Nugent about one old member of the family and another; and Barbara, who knew their history by heart, was a willing and a good gossip. She liked strangers to inquire about the family; for she said "we really are a family, if we've been a queer one at times;" an opinion in which Dora silently but heartily coincided.

"Did ye come across Buck yet?" said Anthony.

"Buck was a tight gossoon, and the greatest dancer in Ireland."

"Here's a reference to him here, I suppose," said Dora. "Somebody is quoted as saying, 'if I could dance like Buck Nugent, and ride like Bob Nugent, I'd be married to-morrow."

"Oh, ay! that's Buck and Bob, the pair of 'em," said Anthony. "They were a great pair, but Buck was the greater."

"And tell me," said Dora suddenly, "what relation

would Buck be to m-"

She saved herself in the nick of time. No, she did not save herself; for her sudden stoppage, and the flush that rose involuntarily to her cheek, were not lost on Anthony.

"'Tis she, no doubt!" he said to himself.

Miss Nugent went serenely on with her darning, the shaded lamp, which she always pulled close to her elbow when at this work, opposing itself between her and Dora.

"What relation would Buck be to ——?" began Anthony.

"To you, Mr. Nugent," replied Dora quietly.

Anthony saw that she knew how nearly she had betrayed herself, and that she was prepared against a second slip.

"Oh! to me," said Anthony. He tried to put some sarcasm into this, but was not good at artistic inflections of that sort. "He was me great uncle, or me great-great

uncle; which was it, Barbara?"

"Is it Buck?" said Barbara, rising and going towards the window. "He was your great-great uncle, of course. Dear, what a dark night!" she continued, as she drew aside to peer out, "and how it rains." She closed the shutters, and drew the curtains. "I wonder will they keep Arthur at the Abbey? D'ye know, Anthony, her ladyship's thinking quite seriously of sending Mangan to the right-about; and she has a notion that if she did so maybe Arthur would lend her a hand in looking after the place."

This, in fact, was a half-developed scheme between Lady Frayne and Barbara and Arthur himself; but it had not before been mooted to Anthony, Barbara having had general instructions to take her chance of finding him in a more or less reasonable mood. Anthony looked up with a start and a growl; but whatever reply he had been on the point of making was prevented by a sudden shouting and hubbub, which seemed to come from the direction of the tower.

For a moment there was a pause in the dining-room. Anthony half rose in his chair, and turned his head in

the direction of the noise.

"It can't be Arthur in any trouble," said Miss Nugent, her darning falling in a heap to the floor, as she turned with a terrified air to her brother.

Dora stood up as the sounds without grew louder.

"Faith, I don't know what it is, but I'll not be long till I do!" said Anthony, making with long strides for the hall.

Dora and Miss Nugent remained facing one another for a few seconds, which seemed minutes. They heard Anthony take down his gun from the rack in the hall, shouting to John Maher to come up as he did so. Then, as he began to turn the key in the huge lock of the hall-door, the door was hurriedly and violently knocked at from without.

"What's that? Who's there?" shouted Anthony

stoutly.

"The police, your honour," cried voices from without. Then, after a moment's pause, and as Anthony withdrew the bolts after turning the key, a voice added: "Tis Mr. Trenchard, your honour. We have him here, hurt."

By this time the door was open. "Lights!" shouted Anthony.

"The lamp, quick, Mrs. Lytton," said Barbara. "Don't ve hear they have Mr. Trenchard hurt out there?"

Barbara was so flurried and so frightened she did not notice that her own hands were on the lamp and had mechanically lifted it. For a moment Dora stood still with fear; a great pain in her heart, and a dozen troubled thoughts in her brain. Instinctively she felt that she was in some way concerned in this affair. Was he shot in her quarrel? Then another question. Had some harm come to him in one of those strange abnormal states in which she had seen the inspector before, but in which, so far as she knew, he had been seen by no one else? This would be more terrible still, for those abnormal states were open to evil interpretations. She went trembling after Miss Nugent to the hall.

Three of the constabulary men were there, supporting Trenchard, who was barely conscious, and bleeding pro-

fusely from a wound in the forehead.

"Go off, John, and bring Dr. Maguire immejutly," said Anthony, who was capable of very practical views in a crisis. "Ye can be there and back in twenty minyuts if ye're brisk."

"One o' the min did go for him already, yer honour," said a constable. "He should be here inside of a quarther of an hour. Where'll yer honour give us lave

to carry the chief?"

"In there, to the dining-room. Lay him on the sofa. Wait, now, till I give ye a hand. So! Be easy, now."

"I'll have the oak room ready in ten minutes," said Barbara. "The poor man! Kate, come up with me, quick, and get the sheets out. Everything's aired, I know."

Meanwhile, Trenchard bled.

"The first thing," said Dora, "is to do what we can to stop the bleeding. Miss Nugent, if you'd let Kate first bring a little water and a towel, I can bathe the wound—it does not go deep, I think—and make a compress until the doctor comes."

Trenchard was carried into the dining-room and laid upon the sofa. He wore his officer's uniform of dark green, and the left shoulder-knot and the front of the tunic were stained with blood. He lay motionless,

now quite unconscious.

Dora still eagerly awaited the explanation she dared not ask for.

"Who hurt him?" inquired Anthony of one of the constables.

"There was fifteen or twinty of 'em in it, yer honour," replied the man. "Sure, 'twas yer honour's telescope they wor afther."

"Tare an' ouns!" cried Anthony. "And who was

after me telescope?"

- "Misther Graham, yer honour, had word that the bhoys would turn out to night."
  - "Had he so?" said Anthony.
    "He had, indade, yer honour."

"And for what?"

"Ah, well, yer honour knows what the bhoys is like. Yer honour spies a couple of them lifting turf two mile beyant, an' 'tis a strange power yer honour has by the same token. The neighbourhood's riz about it, and there's the whole truth."

"But come down to to-night. What are they here for to-night? That's what I'm wanting ye to tell me."

"Troth, yer honour, they came to blind yer honour's telescope. They're waitin' this good while for a nice quyte (quiet) night; but yer honour sees Mr. Graham has got a word about it, an' he, knowin' yer honour's friendliness with Mr. Trenchard, passed the word on to him, and there was orders for a muster. We have three of them caught, yer honour, and not a hair of yer honour's telescope hurt."

"I'm right sure of that!" said Anthony, chuckling over the thought of the iron-studded door, with its patent lock. "But ye had the tails of your coat trodden on, I

think."

"Ah, well, we had just two nice little minyutes of it in the dark, yer honour; an' his honour here," indicat-

ing Trenchard, "got an ugly 'hot' wid a stick."

"It was a good shillelagh made that scratch," said Anthony, and as he said it the wound on Trenchard's forehead disappeared under the neat bandage which during these few moments Dora had been preparing. The doctor came in whilst she was tying it; a jolly, fat, grey-bearded man, who had tied up some hundreds of heads, cracked in eviction brawls during the last few

vears.

"'Twas in the middle of my supper I was," said the doctor, with a mere side glance at Trenchard, "and I see ye've cleared the table. What's come to Trenchard?'Dade, now, but that's a great bandage! Who tied that?"

The doctor took a chair beside the sofa on which Trenchard lay, white and silent, and laid his finger on

the pulse.

"Ah! he'll be in the saddle to-morrow. Wait, though; his pulse is weakening. And what are you boys here for?" turning to the constables, who stood stiffly about sofa with their helmets in their hands.

"Sure, we brought his honour in, yer honour," said the spokesman; "'tis a crack on the head with a black-

thorn he's after gettin'."

"To be sure!" said the doctor genially, still fingering Trenchard's pulse, his watch in the other hand. Then he glanced up at Dora, who was standing, a little pale, at the head of the sofa.

"Mrs. Lytton," said Anthony, following the doctor's

glance.

"Certainly," said Dr. Maguire; "certainly," with a friendly nod at Dora. "Don't I know Mrs. Lytton well? Don't we all know her? What possessed ye, now,

Anthony, to have this telescope?"

While speaking, the doctor had produced a phial from his pocket, and, calling for a teaspoon, he poured a few drops into it and pressed the spoon between Trenchard's lips. Trenchard almost immediately opened his eyes. He stared around him, but his powers of recognition were scarcely alive.

The doctor being closest to his vision, he fixed his

eyes on him.

"Don't be troubling, now," said the doctor with a friendly nod.

Trenchard made an effort to nod and smile in reply.

Then his right hand began to move, and it travelled slowly over his tunic, as though he were feeling for something. A button of the tunic arrested his hand.

"Ah!" he said. "The uniform—not in the uniform,

of course."

"Lost anything?" said the doctor.

"Eh? who's lost anything?" said Trenchard vaguely.

"Have you?" said the doctor.

"N-no," said Trenchard dully. "N-no; I think not"

The doctor turned the phial upside down in the palm of his hand, and passed his hand lightly over Trenchard's

nostrils and mouth.

"Good!" said Trenchard, with a glimmer of returning animation. Then, laying his hand again on the doctor's sleeve, he whispered audibly, "A spoonful of laudanum."

The doctor smiled and shook his head. The patient he thought, was still wandering.

Trenchard, with obvious effort, contracted his brows

and looked fixedly at the doctor.

"A little morphia will do as well," he whispered.

Again the doctor smiled and shook his head.

For a moment there was an angry glare in Trenchard's eyes. He raised himself to a sitting posture and took a fierce grip of the doctor's arm. Those who watched him, Dora alone excepted, thought only that it was a momentary seizure of the brain, the effect of the blow upon the head. Dora alone knew the meaning of Trenchard's words.

His weakness overcame him, and he sank back fainting again.

"His room's ready," said Barbara, entering at that

moment.

"Then we'll have him up to it at once," said the doctor.

Half-an-hour later the house was cleared.

Barbara was installed as nurse, beside Trenchard's bed, Dora to relieve her, if necessary.

Dora lay down, dressed upon her bed, and kept back

sleep. For the first time the thought pricked her heart, "Am I in love with him?"

Now and again she rose from her bed and stole on tiptoe to the room where Barbara sat, upright and wakeful, by Trenchard's bed.

Once she pushed open the door and peered in. "Can

I do anything, Miss Nugent?"

"No, me dear, no. See how quiet he is. Turn into

bed, you; I'll call you if I want you."

The shaded candle left half the room in darkness. Dora had just a glimpse of the still features of Trenchard, yellowish against the white bandage her own hands had tied around his head; the unconcerned and placid face of Miss Nugent at the bedside.

# CHAPTER XXIV.

#### THE CONFESSION.

THE next morning Trenchard was decidedly better. His wound was not serious, but the doctor, who saw him after breakfast, prescribed two or three days' quiet for him in his room.

The skirmish of the night before created a good deal of excitement in the district, and was the general talk. Trenchard received a visit from his head constable in the course of the morning, who reported the safe conveyance to the police barracks of the three men arrested, one of the turf stealers being amongst the trio.

Anthony was furious, and talked of wholesale evictions. Kitty and her mother drove over at lunch-time to inquire for Trenchard; Arthur, who had stayed the night at the Abbey, having walked across after breakfast immediately on hearing of the occurrence.

"Ye'll never get to Jupiter, Anthony, I'm afraid. Ye'll have to dismount the telescope," chuckled Lady

Frayne.

"'Deed, then, I won't!" cried Anthony. "'Tis small

intention I have of doing that. 'Tis there, and there 'twill stand. I don't know what else, or who else, I'll be dismounting, but 'twon't be the telescope."

"We're in for lively times, then," said Lady Frayne.
"There'll be lively times for some of them, I don't

doubt," responded Anthony.

"Indeed, I'm right sorry I ever set eyes on the telescope myself," put in Barbara, who would not have expressed herself in this way had Dora been present. But Dora came in at this moment, and the subject of the telescope dropped.

"Well, I'll go up and see the man," said Lady Frayne when lunch was over. "I'm old enough for that, I think. And I'm sure I hope the poor man will be on his feet again before long, for I may be wanting his help

myself."

"Why, are ye going to set up a telescope of your own,

Sarah?" asked Anthony.

"'Deed, I'm not! One telescope hereabouts is enough, I think. But I'll be giving Mangan notice to quit one of these days, and then I'll have the whole place about my ears."

In saying this she threw a comical glance at Arthur and Kitty, and Barbara turned an eye on Anthony; but Anthony displayed less interest in this subject than he

had once done.

Lady Frayne lifted her portly person out of the wicker chair before-mentioned, which she claimed as her own whenever she visited Carriconna. She had on one of her favourite sack-like jackets, with enormous buttons, and pockets in keeping, and a faded straw hat, like a gigantic mushroom, long gathered, tied under her chin with broad black ribbon.

"Is he up, or in bed, or how is he?" inquired her ladyship.

"He's in bed," replied Barbara.

"Well, I'll go softly, for he's, maybe, asleep. Give me those grapes we brought, Kitty; he's a great man for fruit."

When Lady Frayne came down again, after twenty

minutes or so, Miss Nugent and Dora were in the diningroom alone.

"Well, and what do ye think of him, Sarah?" said the former lady.

Dora was helping to cover down and label the first batch of that plum jam for which Carriconna was renowned, and the whole room was perfumed with the fragrance, not to mention the odour of the brandy in which the papers were soaked.

"I declare," said Lady Frayne, "it's my opinion" and here she dropped her voice a tone—"that if the ruffian had hit him the least bit harder he'd have knocked the senses out of him. He's not himself at all, as it is."

Dora went on tying as steadily as before, but she turned about a little, so that her face was nearly hidden from the other ladies. She had seen nothing of Trenchard since the disquieting glimpse she had of him late on the previous night, nor had she ventured to show much curiosity as to his condition since then. But Dora fancied she knew, a good deal better than the rest, precisely how it was with Trenchard. To help him—how? Fenced in, as she was, on every side, she did not know.

"He wandered a little in the night, and he's had the fidgets terribly all day, but I've seen nothing worse in him than that," answered Barbara.

"I daresay he is a little feverish," said Dora; "indeed I think Dr. Maguire said so this morning."

"And, d'ye know," said Lady Frayne, "he's quite turned against poor Maguire; isn't that an odd thing, now? and they always were the best of friends."

"Ah, that's nothing," said Barbara; "'tis only that he's

cross a little with the wound in his head."

"No, no; 'tis more than that," insisted Lady Frayne. "He declares that Maguire's not giving him the right medicines at all."

"One has fancies of that sort in such a state," said Dora, striving to quiet herself, for she was sure that she knew more than she admitted.

"Well, a good recovery to him!" said Lady Frayne,

rising to go. "And a quick one too; for, as I said, I'll be wanting him by-and-by. And, Barbara, if ye're wanting anything, let me know. Now, I'd like to know where Kitty and your Arthur are hiding, for I'll be bound 'tis hiding they are, somewhere."

Her ladyship put her head out of the window and gave a whoop and a "Kitty, come out of that now, wherever y'are," which brought the lovers in double quick

time from some invisible shelter in the garden.

"Run along and bring the car round, the audacious pair of ye!" called Lady Frayne.

"Yes, mamma, dear."

"Yes, Lady Frayne, certainly."

"Oh, a nice obedient pair, I know! Make haste,

"I'll go a mile along the road with you," said Miss Nugent. "I think it was to-day I was to call at Clonlost."

"Put on your hat, then, quick. Where's Anthony

away to?"

"To the town, to see the carpenter about something. He'll not be back this good while. Mrs. Lytton, dear, I think I may trust the patient to you. I'll give a look in to him when I'm upstairs, and he won't be wanting anything till I'm home, I think."

"I shall be here, Miss Nugent," said Dora quietly. Left to herself, Dora went on with her work. She made one observation aloud, "I hope Aunt Barbara will

not be long."

There was no sound in the house. She had left the door of the dining-room open that she might hear if Trenchard rang his bell; and the dining-room window, and the window of Trenchard's room, which was just above, were open also.

Dora went on quietly tying down her covers, and not

thinking of the covers at all.

"I wish," said she to herself presently, "that he would tell the doctor himself; it would be better. But he won't do that." Then, after a pause, "He has not even told me."

As she said this there was a noise of wheels on the gravel, and Trenchard's man, Sergeant Jones, drove up in his master's smart trap. Dora knew that Trenchard had sent for him. He was, as we saw, in his uniform when wounded on the previous evening, and he had sent word home in the morning for a change of linen and clothes to be brought him. This at least was the ostensible reason for his summoning the sergeant.

Dora went out to the door.

"Master better, ma'am, I hope," said Jones with a salute.

"He's just pretty well, I think, sergeant. You may get down; I'll hold the horse."

The sergeant got down and lifted a portmanteau from

the trap.

"A few things the master wanted, ma'am. I'd better see him myself, if you please, ma'am. Shall I call John to come to the horse?"

"I think John's out with Mr. Nugent. You needn't

mind, sergeant; I can hold the horse."

"Very kind of you, ma'am; but a great trouble, I'm sure. The master won't keep me long, though. Is he abed, ma'am?"

"Yes; his room is on the first floor. The door is open, I think. He will hear you going up."

The sergeant saluted, and went in with the port-

manteau.

Dora, standing at the horse's head, immediately under Trenchard's window, could hear him talking with his servant. She heard his voice, that is to say, and the voice of Jones replying to him.

Trenchard's tones passed alternately from argument to persuasion and to insistence. The sergeant appeared to hold back, to argue on another side, and finally to hold

his peace.

Then, for the first time, Dora heard a distinct utter-

ance of Trenchard's.

He seemed to have risen in his bed, and he spoke sharply and with anger. "If you do not, I will get out of bed and go myself." After a moment or two came a reply from the sergeant, but it was inaudible A minute or two later he was down stairs again, having an air of extreme discomposure.

"Much obliged to you, ma'am," he said to Dora.
"What do you think of your master, sergeant?"

"I've seen him this way before, ma'am," replied the sergeant, as if seeking to avoid a direct reply. He had mounted into the trap and gathered up the reins; Dora stood aside. "I hope the master will be able to come home to-morrow or the next day, ma'am," continued the sergeant, wheeling the trap round; "he's always best at home when there's anything wrong with him. Much obliged to you, ma'am," and the sergeant, who evidently did not seek a conversation, saluted again and drove off.

Dora could have formed a shrewd guess as to what had taken place between Mr. Trenchard and his servant. She returned to the dining-room and went on with her work. She was thinking of a case once described to her by her husband; the case of an opium eater who had voluntarily placed himself in her husband's hands to be cured. She recalled with a shudder her husband's account of this man's terrible sufferings when suddenly and completely deprived of the drug. She even remembered an expression he had used. "There are no conceivable torments like those endured by the opium eater when deprived of his opium." And she remembered how he had said to her afterwards, when the case had left his hands, that in dealing with a similar one he should never again attempt to enforce complete abstinence upon the patient during the first stages of treatment. alcohol," he said, "it was different. Cut off the supply there immediately and entirely, but you cannot deal thus with opium." She remembered this case especially, because her husband had spoken of the patient as one of the most refined and charming men he had ever known, but whose nature, at the time when he com menced to treat him, had already begun to be transformed under the malignant influence of the drug which lulls to sleep all that is highest and noblest in heart and brain.

Trenchard, when his servant had left him, lay exhausted for a time; but not for long. He opened his eyes and turned over in bed; took up a book and began to read; threw it aside and tried to sleep; but to sleep was as difficult as to read; both, in short, were impos-Then a thought seemed to seize him; he looked round for the portmanteau which Jones had brought It was within reach of his hand. He opened it and took out its contents; selecting a tweed coat and waistcoat, he searched the pockets of both garments carefully and with eagerness. Whatever it was that he searched for, he could not find it. He flung the coat and waistcoat aside with an impatient expression. few moments more he had worked himself up into a state of intense and excited irritability. He plucked at the bed-clothes, grinding his teeth, knitting and unknitting his eyebrows, and moving his head with short rapid motions from side to side on the pillow. At last he made a great effort to calm himself, unclenching his hands and lying perfectly still and rigid, his eyes shut. The tension was extreme, both physical and mental; his forehead and the palms of his hands were moist. The effort at restraint failed him; all at once he rose up, threw off the bed-clothes, and began hurriedly to dress himself.

Dora with alarm heard him moving in his room; she went to the door of the dining-room and stood there irresolute. She went to the foot of the stairs. The door of Trenchard's room, just visible from there, was closed. She went back to the dining-room and laid her hand upon the bell. Should she ring and send Kate to him? Again she hesitated, in a manner very unlike herself. She heard Trenchard's door open and his foot on the stairs. There was no doubt about it, he was coming down.

The step that echoed softly on the stairs sounded cautious and even stealthy. Dora waited until it reached

the hall. Then she took a step forward herself, that Trenchard might know he had been heard. He hesitated halfway across the hall and stood still; Dora went again to the door of the dining-room; he turned and they faced one another. Trenchard's aspect was nothing less than sorrowful. He was extremely pale, and the bandage around his forehead gave him a yet more wretched look. He seemed to tremble, and to have lost the power of speech.

"I—I thought a little air would do me good," he

said; "a beautiful afternoon, is it not?"

"But you are not fit to go out," said Dora. "The doctor said that you were not to get up to-day. Miss Nugent has gone with Lady Frayne for an hour, and I am left in charge of you. You will have to obey me implicitly."

She said this with a smile, but resolutely. "Come in

here at once, and sit down."

Trenchard followed her into the dining-room.

"It was foolish of me, I know," he said; "but I sent Jones for something, and somehow the notion came into my head that I would walk a step or two and meet him. So dull up there, you know."

He spoke like a man very ill at ease, and did not look

full at Dora.

"Your head troubles you—a little?" she said; "it was a dreadful blow you had."

"Yes; it must be my head," he said; "my head, no

doubt."

"Sit here," said Dora, drawing Anthony's arm-chair round to face the window, through which flowed in the delicious soft air of mid afternoon. "I am only going to let you stay a little while."

There was a caress in her tone, and Trenchard flushed

slightly as he obeyed her.

"Tell me," she went on, "was it something very

particular you sent the sergeant for?"

"A good fellow, Jones," said Trenchard; "but odd, strait-laced notions. A soldier, you know. Very kind of you, Mrs. Lytton."

"But you haven't answered my question," she in-

sisted; "was it rude of me to ask it?"

"You couldn't ask a rude thing, you know. How weak I am! Maguire's medicine is no use at all. Mrs. Lytton"—stretching out his hand, he leaned forward and took hold of her arm—"get me some laudanum!" Having said this he looked curiously at her, with keen eyes, as though to read what effect that request, vehemently spoken, had on her.

"I knew that that was what you wanted," said Dora.

"Will you get it for me?"

"You take opium—regularly?" said Dora quietly.

"I have been a confirmed opium-eater for two years."

"Have you so little love for yourself?"

"It is no longer a question of self-love. I might have asked myself that once. It is useless now."

"But you know something of the miseries of opium. You are proving to me now that you do," said Dora.

"Something!" said Trenchard. "I know the woes

of opium through and through."

"You are the slave of opium, then?" said Dora, and severity blended with compassion in her voice.

"The slave, indeed; yet not the willing one," said

Trenchard, and his words were almost a groan.

"You have made efforts? Do you make them still?" Once again Trenchard gave her a curious look.

"Do you remember the first night we met? I had drunk opium that day."

"Yes," said Dora, "I know."

"The fit was upon me. I should have drunk again that night, and drunk heavily, but—but for you."

Dora's glance for a moment sought the smooth sward of the pleasure ground sloping softly towards the lake.

of the pleasure ground sloping softly towards the lake.
Then she turned her eyes again on Trenchard.
""Put you see I have not head you form it since "the

"But, you see, I have not kept you from it since," she said.

"You have," he answered. "These last weeks I have not taken a fifth of what I took before. To-day—to-day, I am weak and ill. See! I have humbled myself before you."

Tears sprang into Dora's eyes, and glistened there,

though they did not fall.

Trenchard saw them, but feigned that he did not. He did not want to seem to play on her. Dora was calm again in an instant.

"You have sat too long," she said; "you are weak,

as you say. But wait here one moment."

She rose and went swiftly from the room. Mounting to her own room she unlocked a dressing-case of fine morocco which stood on the table, and took from it a small phial three parts filled with a dark fluid. With this, and a tumbler, which she had half-filled with water, she returned to the dining-room.

In the few moments that had elapsed since she left it Trenchard's better and his weaker self had fought it out again. She noticed him a shade paler, but perfectly contained. Standing beside him, she took the cork

from the phial. He laid his hand upon her arm.

"I do not want it," he said.

A wonderful softness came into Dora's face, and some pride too.

"I knew that you had strength, if you would use it,"

she said.

"It is not my strength, but yours," he answered.

"It is your own," she softly urged. "Think that it is your own, for "—and the softness of her face became a wonderful sympathy—"you will need it again."

"I shall need it the less if you are near me," said Trenchard gravely, but with a visible tremor.

Dora flushed a little against her will; but she said only—still holding the open phial in her hand, "You are sure that you can resist? I am not trying to tempt you, but my husband was a doctor, and I know myself justified in what I am doing."

"I can resist," answered Trenchard, "and easily."

"You make me very glad," said Dora; and added quickly: "The harm of ten failures goes for nothing against the good of one victory. But I am still the nurse, you know. You must let me send you upstairs again now. But tell me first—was it for this that you

sent the sergeant?" She touched the phial of laudanum.

"Yes," said Trenchard, "it was for that."

"And will he bring it?"

"Yes."

A pause, during which their eyes met again.

"Take it from him," said Trenchard, "and—keep it."

"I will give it to you when you ask for it," answered Dora.

"You have my secret," said Trenchard as he was leaving the room.

"But have you not also one of mine?" she smiled.

He took her hand, and she let him hold it for a moment.

But it was two secrets against one; for when Dora was alone again, she knew that Trenchard loved her.

# CHAPTER XXV.

## DORA AND THE SERGEANT UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

WHEN Miss Nugent returned a little later on, Trenchard was asleep.

"And you've finished the jampots, I declare!" said Barbara delightedly. "Well, now, that is good of you. No trouble with the patient, I hope?"

"He has been goodness itself."

"Sure, I knew he would be; he's just the nicest man in the county. 'Tis a thousand pities he doesn't get a wife. Don't you think it is yourself, now?"

"He's a particular person, no doubt. He wants to be

sure of making no mistake."

"Indeed, ye may mistake at forty every bit as well as at twenty. I'm sure of that," said the old maid. "But come now, me dear, put on your hat and go and get a breath of air; it's just the most perfect afternoon in the

world after the rain last night. I believe those wicked fellows did no great harm to the place after all. I was afraid they'd have the garden trampled to pieces."

"Everything has escaped, I think—even the tele-

scope."

"Oh, the telescope, indeed!" laughed Barbara.
"But run now, dear, or the best of the day'll be gone.
Will ye have a cup of tea before ye go?"

"No, I won't wait for tea, thanks," and Dora ran off

to get her hat.

Since the evening of her adventure in the graveyard she had taken her walks by daylight, and in places not quite so sequestered. No further mishap had befallen her, but she was rather afraid of finding herself alone in any remote place after dusk.

Debating in what direction she should stroll this afternoon, she suddenly remembered Trenchard's in-

junctions about the sergeant and his package.

Suppose the sergeant should arrive while Dora was out. The drug would be given to Trenchard himself; he would think her careless of her promise; worse than that, he would be exposed again to temptation, and Dora knew enough of such cases as his to guess that the effort of renunciation would be followed sooner or later by a reaction.

All this might be avoided were she to go and meet the sergeant on the road. She set out to walk towards Moyrath, along the high road. At most hours of the day the high road was as quiet as any boreen that branched off from it to some outlying cottage. For a distance from Carriconna it was bounded on either side by tall hedges; these gave way to low stone walls, beyond either of which the country stretched away for many a lonely mile, though here and there a short ridge of hills narrowed the horizon. No spot apter for thought or reverie. The waning sun, arrested by the high and arching trees along a portion of the road, showed in patches and broad bars across it. The road was already almost dry again.

"A very strange afternoon indeed!" thought Dora

She was not thinking of the weather, but of the after-

noon's experiences.

"So he really cares for me!" A woman of Dora's knowledge and experience could not indeed entertain much doubt on that point.

"And he suffers so! Yes, and he will have more to suffer yet, poor fellow! Will he succeed or not? I have read—or did Alec tell me?—that one scarcely ever does succeed. Well, will he succeed? I think that will depend a little upon me—a good deal, perhaps."

Then she thought how curious it all was—the husband who was dead, so brilliant and full of promise, but a drunkard; and now this other, young, rich, with a good position in the county, so gentle and so winning, in love

with her, and an opiomanic.

She turned a corner of the road and saw the sergeant driving towards her.

The sergeant drew up beside her.

Salute, and "Nothing wrong, ma'am, I hope?"

"Not at all, sergeant; Mr. Trenchard seems decidedly better this afternoon."

"Very restless when I was with him, ma'am."

"He was asleep when I came out."

"Very glad, ma'am;" and this was something more than a formula, for the whole expression of the sergeant's face softened as he said it.

"You have something for him, I think, sergeant?"
Sergeant Jones stiffened himself a little. His air was

grave again.

The prim soldier considered that this strange affection of his master was an affair which involved, in some way, the honour of the family. It was something upon which he held that reticence the most severe and rigid was a prime duty on the part of a retainer. Sergeant Jones had felt himself under a cloud these two years past, not on his own, but on his master's account. If he continued to hold his head as erect as formerly, it was that he was prompted by the sense of duty, rather than (as of old) by the sense of inner rectitude. The whole matter was a troublous mystery to the sergeant.

He saw a young and affectionate master—the son of a revered master—slipping down what seemed to him to be the path of weakly self-indulgence; he was astonished, mortified, humiliated. But he, with his wife, had guarded the secret jealously. He thought that his wife and himself had it for their own.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the sergeant; and after an

emphatic pause, "I was to give it to himself."

"Mr. Trenchard wishes you to give it to me, sergeant."

"Humph!"

Sergeant Jones's hand went instinctively to a pocket

of his coat, and he said nothing.

Perhaps some instinct akin to the soldier's made Dora feel what he felt. At any rate, she understood the gesture, and liked it. With that frankness which she could assume when she needed it, but which was genuine here, she said:

"You may give it to me, sergeant, Mr. Trenchard

wishes it; he has spoken to me."

There was no mistaking the tone in which Dora said this.

The sergeant—a shrewd man enough—perceived that the honour of the family was in no danger here. The handsome widow was a friend, possibly even an ally.

Sergeant Jones became gallant; but in the interests

of the family.

"You've walked a good piece, ma'am. We're a mile and three-quarters from the house. If you'll be so kind as to get up, I'll drive you home again."

Dora was quite willing, perhaps more than willing. She had divined already that the servant was in some

degree his master's confidant.

When she was seated in the gig the sergeant took a small packet from his pocket and gave it to her.

"I hope it won't be wanted, ma'am," said the faithful Jones.

"I do not think it will, sergeant."

"You've had a talk with the master, ma'am?"

"A long talk after you had gone, sergeant. He came downstairs."

"You don't say so, ma'am! What, weak and tied up like that?"

"Sergeant," said Dora, "my husband was a doctor, and I learned something from him about many kinds of diseases. Your master is ill with an illness that requires a treatment of its own. He is a patient, and must be treated as such. He wants more than a common doctor. Not one doctor in a thousand knows what to do in such a case as this. Sergeant, you must turn doctor yourself, and you must take your instructions from me."

"What instructions, ma'am?" said the sergeant, whose habitual phlegm did not avail him here. Dora had a kind of magnetism about her, which was not easy

to resist.

"What do you think of your master, sergeant?" said she.

"Think of him, ma'am? Why, that there was no one like him—bar his father—two years ago!"

"How did it begin, sergeant?"

"He had a bad fall, hunting one day, ma'am, two years ago come six weeks; he's never been the same since then."

"Where was he hurt?"
"In the head, ma'am."

A witness under cross-examination drops what seems to him a casual word, of little or no import. It tells the counsel all he needs to know.

"Sergeant," said Dora, "you drive well, and I feel quite safe with you. But a dip of a few inches in the road, if you were not looking for it, or any little thing that could startle the horse, might bring him to his knees in a moment. Suppose that you or I were pitched out in a moment from now, we might be hurt, and we might be well again, apparently, in a week. But if we had been touched in a certain spot we should never be the same creatures again. We might end in a madhouse, or on the gallows. Sergeant, your master's sickness is not a wilful one. Remember that, please."

"But won't he be himself again, ma'am?"

"That will depend partly on himself, sergeant, and partly on those who—who have a regard for him."

"But he won't see a doctor, ma'am."

- "The more need that those about him should be his doctors."
  - "I'd be his doctor, ma'am, if I could—God knows!"
- "So you can be, sergeant; but remember that the sick are not as we are."

"I've tried to keep him from it all I can, ma'am."

"Very good, sergeant; and do so always. But—we have spoken quite freely, and we may speak more freely—remember that you are treating with a sick man. Opium is a sickness of its own kind. A man put in prison is not the worse for the sudden stoppage of his drink. But as to opium this is not so sure. If it were alcohol, stop it at once. Now, sergeant, let me get down; it is only five minutes' walk to the gates. You will have your master home again in a day or two, I think; and you will know how to deal with him."

"I wish you was Dr. Maguire, ma'am, or Dr. Maguire

was you."

"Never mind Dr. Maguire, sergeant; we shall be able to manage without him."

"That's if you'll take his place, ma'am."

"Very well, sergeant; you may consider me Dr. Maguire, if you like."

"Tis the best thing you could say for the master's

sake, ma'am, I'm sure."

"I have the package, sergeant, but I think I shall send it back again to you unopened," said Dora, as she got down from the trap.

"I hope so, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am. Good

day!"

"Good day, sergeant!"

Dora passed through the "grand gates," and Sergeant

Jones returned to Moyrath.

Dora liked to make friends with everybody. She had made friends that afternoon with Sergeant Jones. She would have been flattered had she heard all that the sergeant said of her in the housekeeper's room at Moyrath that evening.

Barbara was sitting on the terrace; Anthony not yet

returned.

"He's still asleep," said Barbara. "You must have charmed him some way."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

#### BOYCOTTING POUR RIRE.

It was three days after the departure of Trenchard from Carriconna.

Breakfast was preparing, and Arthur, whose matutinal habits were brisk, had just come in from an early constitutional.

Kitty's pony, ridden by the Doyne Abbey stable-boy,

raced up the drive full canter.

Arrived at the door, where Arthur awaited him, the boy, snorting like the pony, pulled a letter from his pocket.

"A-letther-for you-sorr."

"It should be worth reading, Joe," said Arthur, "if you had to ride like that to bring it. Get down and take your breath."

"I can—take—it—aysier—where I'm sittin'—yer

honour."

"Hullo!" exclaimed Arthur, "whew!"
"Ah, 'tis—that—indade, yer—honour!"

The letter was a pencil scrawl from Kitty, containing one line.

"We're boycotted / Come and help us !-Kitty."

Arthur ran back into the hall, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"They're boycotted at Doyne!"

Every one came to the rescue—Anthony and Barbara, at least; for Dora was not yet down.

"Ye'd better go over at once," said Anthony to his son. "I'll go over meself after breakfast."

"Sure, he didn't get his own breakfast yet," put in

Barbara.

"I'll breakfast at Doyne," said Arthur.

"Maybe they're not breakfasting at all at Doyne. Come in here, Joe, and say what's all this. Are ye

really boycotted up there at the Abbey?"

"We are so, me lady. Not a word of a lie in it. By the same token, me lady, I was yelped at comin' out o' the gates this mornin', an' a couple o' the bhoys thried to hot (hurt) me wud a sthone. Indade we are boycotted, me lady, and that's the thruth."

"My lady has put Mangan away, I suppose?"

"Thrue for yerself, my lady. That's zhust where it is."

"And has she sent for the police?"

"I don't think her ladyship did yet, me lady. Ah! 'tis not her ladyship nor me Lady Kitty they'll be hurtin', I think. There's no great likin' for Mangan about the place; 'twon't be a raal good boycott at all, I think."

"'Deed, I hope it won't!" said Miss Nugent.

"More power to yer ladyship's elbow! I hope the same meself."

"Well, I'm off!" said Arthur. "Joe, you'd better go on at once and I'll follow you."

"I'll wait for yer honour, wud yer honour's lave. I'll

be safer along of yer honour."

But here was the stable-boy with a capital mount—for Kitty's pony had blood in him—and Arthur with no steed at all but the old family nag, which served all equine uses, and was as bad for one as for another.

Weeks ago, while Anthony lived in day-dreams of limitless expenditure, he had talked of building new stables, and of stocking them magnificently. Arthur was to have his hacks and his hunters. But the stables were unbuilt; Arthur had neither hunter nor hack; and the family coach horse, which was saddle-horse and plough-horse to boot, still had undisputed sway in the yard.

"Well, we must go together then," said Arthur, "but

I'll go on foot."

In five minutes they were well on the road. Joe had not only volunteered, but had entreated, that Arthur should have the saddle; but Arthur stuck to his intention to walk, and thus they made the ground in company.

The road was as quiet as usual, and not even at the grand gate of the Abbey was there a creature to be seen save one. A little beyond the gate, and apparently pacing to and fro before it, was a policeman in his undress uniform of cap and tunic, his bayonet in his belt. He saluted Arthur as the pair passed through the gate. There was no one in the Abbey grounds, and no one visible about the house.

"Where's Kitty?" asked Arthur of himself, thinking she might have been on the look-out for him.

The hall door stood open as usual and he went in.

There was nobody in the hall. He crossed to the dining-room. Table was laid for breakfast, but the room was empty. He went into the hall again, and was on the point of shouting "Kitty," when Kitty herself appeared at the top of the kitchen-stairs, with the breakfast-tray in her hands. Her pink cambric frock was hidden under a huge holland apron, which descended from her neck to her heels. Her hair was tumbled, though it was only just breakfast-time; and her cheeks were ruddy, though they had not met the sun that morning.

"Here's breakfast," said Lady Kitty, "if you haven't

had it."

Arthur found nothing better to say than, "I haven't!"

"You ought to be awfully hungry."

"I am. But I say, Kitty, have you cooked it your-self?"

"Oh, no, indeed. I can't cook. Mamma cooked it."

"Mamma! This is going to be a breakfast out of the

common."

"That's what I said to mamma. But she doesn't like it, you know, at all. I wouldn't go down to the kitchen, Arthur, if I were you. Mamma's down there."

"I'd like to, though," said Arthur; to whom the vision of Lady Frayne en cuisinière suggested a novel effect of comedy.

Kitty carried her tray into the dining room, Arthur at

her heels.

Lady Frayne, puffing much worse than the stable-boy,

came after, with a covered dish.

"Oh! ye may laugh," said her ladyship, "but we're only beginning it now. Wait till ye're done this for six weeks, me child."

"They can't boycott us six weeks, mamma!"

"They can, and two years, if they like!"

This was grave. Kitty, with Arthur's assistance, took the cover off the bacon in silence.

Lady Frayne took her place at the head of the table, said grace, and began to eat like a friar just out of his fasting. She had an appetite whose edge no mundane trial was able to dull. Arthur allowed her a few minutes' start, and then said:

"So you're right down boycotted?"

"There's hardly a man at work on the place this minute. What I'll do I don't know, with more than half the corn to cut, and the farm to take care of itself."

"'Twas Wilson who milked the cows this morning,"

said Kitty.

The notion of Wilson, the venerable butler, who was so short-sighted that at arm's length he would scarcely know the cow from the milking-stool, sitting down to the functions of milkmaid in his declining days, was too much for Arthur; but Lady Frayne declined to laugh.

"Ye may milk the cows yourself to-night," said she to

Arthur.

"Delighted," answered Arthur. "I've milked a camel before now. And Peters, is he gone?"

Peters was coachman and gardener in one.

"Oh, no, I have him; but he's down at the corn, and Wilson's on his way to join him. If it were to rain again as it did the night Trenchard was knocked over, the crop would be just ruined. And there's the second hay crop is down in the long meadow waiting to be tossed,

Norah, the under-maid, is the only woman we have in the house. Mary, the cook, Mangan's sister, took herself off last night, and the other baggage, Susan, followed her."

"Apropos of Trenchard," said Arthur, "have you sent word to him?"

"Now, how could I? But he'll hear of it soon enough. Mr. Graham was in this morning, though, and

asked what help I'd be wanting."

"We'll have to get some men over from the barracks for the corn. We are not going to be beaten, anyway. The corn's the only serious trouble, and we'll get that in somehow. But didn't you think of the corn, Lady-Frayne, when you sent Mangan to the right-about so quickly?"

"I did, indeed. And I didn't send him off that way at all. I gave him a month's notice, thinking we'd have the corn, hay and roots in before I got rid of him. But he's let the month's wages go, and his character too,

rather than stay."

"And taken his own people with him, I suppose?"
"The whole of them. You may be sure of that."

This Mangan had been steward to her ladyship during many years, and a thorn in her side from the first. She had long suspected him of double dealing in his sales of cattle and other matters, and once or twice indeed had brought detection home to him. But Lady Frayne had all the Irish unwillingness to part with an old servant, and Mangan, though threatened, had kept his place. Truth is that, though surly and overbearing, and always inclined to do one turn for his mistress and two for himself, he was an excellent manager and a great worker. He made his men work too, and these feared as much as they disliked him. Mangan was a little power, too, in the neighbourhood. But Lady Frayne, though something less than winning in her manner towards her dependants, had never been in ill-favour with them. Her justice, if severe, was justice always. She had, moreover, lived at Boyne during the whole of her widowhood, and was personal y known to every man, woman and

child in and about the place. For all this the people may have found a certain grim humour in the notion of leaving her magnificent ladyship to be dependent for the management of her little estate on the butler, the coachman, and the head gardener.

Lady Frayne, as has been seen, was somewhat taken aback on finding the tables so promptly turned on her by steward Mangan. But she had no intention of

letting herself be bested by steward Mangan.

Truth to say, she had counted much on Arthur. ladyship made no secret about her change of front towards him, nor about the reasons which had dictated it. Arthur might come and go at Doyne as he pleased now. In days gone by Lady Frayne would not have allowed that kind of thing at all, but Arthur was now a parti, and though my lady talked as if she pretended to believe that the Carriconna fortune would be squandered before Arthur's turn came to profit by it, her private opinion on the matter was quite different. Arthur's slightly uncomfortable position at home, where his father could not be brought either to give him an independence or to find for him the occupation which he still talked of providing, made him doubly anxious to be stirring in some other direction, and Lady Frayne was as willing to make use of him as he to lend her his services. He was an excellent amateur farmer, and well liked amongst the people; and Lady Frayne did not lose sight of the fact that, in the event of Arthur marrying Kitty, he would in course of time become the legitimate manager of her small estate.

They achieved breakfasting, as the French say, and the condition of the table when that meal was over testified in an eloquent manner to the fact that nobody's appetite had been spoiled.

"Well, these things have got to be washed, I suppose," said Kitty, surveying the table. "Who's going to wash

up?"

"I'm the best bottle-washer in Europe," said Arthur.
"Nonsense," exclaimed Lady Frayne. "I've plenty
else for you to do, Arthur. Where's Norah, Kitty?"

"She was making the beds awhile ago, and then she had potatoes to dig for lunch; and after that to feed all the live stock; and then help Joe to scour the yard."

"The yard will have to go unscoured this morning," interrupted Lady Frayne; but she said it with a sigh, for she was a martinet in the garden and the yard. "It's a dreadful thing to wash greasy dishes," added her ladyship, looking at the empty bacon dish. "I'll keep a garden in order with any one; I wouldn't think myself too hardly used if I had to take a turn in the yard; and I don't know but I might do a bit of reaping if I could fix my skirts; but I won't wash dishes."

"But I say, you know, it's wonderful how well you can get along with them unwashed. Just a bit of scour, you know." observed Arthur. "We came to that shift often

out there in Africa."

"You're a dirty creature," cried Kitty. "I'm going to wash the dishes myself, soda and hot water are all they want, and we're not run out of those yet."

"No, I'll not have you wash them either," asserted her mother; "you'll destroy your hands—there's nothing like soda and boiling water to ruin a person's hands."

Kitty had particularly pretty little soft white dimpled hands, which looked as if they should never be put to

any severer use than boxing a lover's ears.

"Then the dishes must wait," said Kitty, "until Norah has made the beds, and dug the vegetables, and fed the creatures. I only hope nobody will call."

Four callers arrived immediately—Barbara, and Dora, and Anthony, in the Carriconna car, and Trenchard on horseback—from Moyrath.

"We were just hoping that nobody would come," said Lady Frayne; "I hope ye're not expecting breakfast,

any of ye."

"'Tis work we're hungry for," said Barbara.

"That's a good thing, any way," said Lady Frayne. "There's work enough here and to spare."

"And what have you for me to do?" asked Trenchard.

"Suppose you hang Mangan up at the front gate, to

begin with," said her ladyship.

"He'd be a dreadful nuisance there," said Barbara.
"We'd have people coming to look at him, and there'd be no getting in or out."

"The first thing is to get the corn in," said Arthur, and every hour is precious for that. I'm going down

to the field at once."

"There's a trifle of rain coming up, I think," said Anthony, the comforter. "I took a look round from

the tower this morning."

"You and your telescope!" cried Lady Frayne. "I declare everything has been wrong everywhere since you got it."

"No matter about the telescope," put in Barbara hastily, observing that Dora's feathers were disposed to rise. "Have ye any one to wash up, Sarah? or are these things going to stay here all day?"

"I dare say Norah'll be ready for them in an hour or

two," said Lady Frayne.

"And is Norah the only girl ye have left?" inquired

Barbara.

"Herself and no one else," said Lady Frayne. "'Tis well we had bread baked yesterday, and the week's butter

churned the day before."

"Oh, if ye have bread, butter and potatoes, ye're made," said Barbara. "Now I'll see to these myself"—indicating the contents of the breakfast-table; "and Norah may go off to the fields."

"Can I do nothing?" said Dora. "I'm a capital

cook."

"Sure we've nothing to cook but potatoes," said Lady Frayne.

"But it isn't everybody who can cook potatoes,"

answered Dora.

"I declare now, Sarah," said Barbara, "I took leave to bring over a round of beef we had spiced yesterday. 'Tis a great thing for a picnic lunch."

"Ye're a good soul, indeed," said Lady Frayne.

"Well," said Trenchard, "I'll send Joe with a note to

Graham, to get what men he can from the barracks." (In Ireland, by the way, a police station is a barracks.) "And I am good for any help I can give you for the day."

"Ye're very good people indeed, all of ye," said Lady Frayne; "and Barbara and myself will bring some food out to ye at lunch-time. Mrs. Lytton, will ye be above tossing hay into stooks with Kitty?"

"Indeed, no," said Dora. "I will do whatever you

like; that is, whatever I can be taught to do."

Arthur and his father had already gone on to the corn. Kitty went upstairs for her hat, saying she would follow to the meadow immediately.

"Is it the long meadow, Lady Frayne?" asked

Trenchard.

"The long meadow, yes."

Dora and Trenchard sauntered on, out through the pleasure-ground; on into the orchard, where the ripening apples glimmered in the September sun, and the damsons were beginning to purple; from the orchard into the boreen, the hedges on either side white with wild convolvulus; the pungent odour of turf-smoke rising here and there.

Dora and Trenchard were at a somewhat delicate stage, and a sweet one. Is there anything in the world more delightful than when love, not openly confessed as yet, begins to be felt and understood? It was thus with Trenchard and with Dora.

After that curious conversation recently reported, they had had one other meeting at Carriconna, before Trenchard's departure. It was on the morning of the day on which he left; and quite an accidental meeting, as far as accident may be admitted in these affairs.

"I have to thank you for a second victory," Trenchard had said. Neither Dora's phial nor the one she had received from the sergeant had been called into use.

"And yourself," Dora had replied. "You must not

forget your own share."

"That counted for little, I fear."

"Impossible! It is oneself, and no one else, in the last resort."

Then Trenchard turned and faced Dora with this:

"If you were to leave here to morrow, I should be like Samson shorn."

"I will not believe it," answered Dora.

But were not Trenchard's words the equivalent of a declaration of love? Not much less than this, indeed. Did Dora accept them as such? Had she not done so, she must have rebuffed him somewhat. She did not do this. She let Trenchard tell her, by suggestion, that he cared for her; for she had begun to care for him. Their relations were thus at once transformed.

They walked through the boreen, talking little. One is well forward when one can walk thus in a country lane, and know that there is no necessity of inventing descriptive observations on the sun and the convolvulus.

"The wound is no longer troublesome, I hope?"

said Dora.

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"Scarcely at all, thanks; only in the sun sometimes. By the way, we are going to have a hot sun to-day; please not be too rash in your hay-making."

"I shall remember your counsel. Are you going to

remain for the day?"

"I cannot. I have a duty meeting ten miles away this afternoon."

"You will leave us at the mercy of the neighbourhood?"

"Oh! you need have no fear. If I thought you in danger—well, I think you know where I should be then."

# CHAPTER XXVII.

#### AMATEUR HAYMAKERS.

THE long sloping hay-field was quite deserted. The hay, not yet raked into rows, lay scattered over all the field, scenting the warm fresh air of morning with its delicious odour. In one corner of the field was a pond,

with trees shading it on one side, and for this spot Dora instinctively made, the sun being already of a very sensible warmth. Trenchard and she had parted without further words, he going on to the corn-field. was a day, an hour, and a scene to make one dream on words of love, if one had ever listened to such. Dora had listened to such words often; to Trenchard's the last. What to think of Trenchard's words? They hummed in Dora's ears, and the little soft musical sounds of the September morning—the sounds of bees, and of leaves rustling in the breeze, and the faint twittering of larks high overhead-seemed so many different echoes of them. Perhaps these words of his touched some chord in her that no words the like had smitten before. Had not Dora loved her husband then? Yes, for she was not one to give herself away unless it were love that moved her. But her married life had been the saddest failure; it had drawn her through some muddy ways and some parts of her nature had not escaped a smirch. She had learned to know, even while her husband lived, that the love she had given him was wasted; and looking back now upon those anxious and fevered days that had made a full three-quarters of her married life, she wondered whether it were not fascination rather than love that had enchained her first, and that had held her blindly faithful to him until the day of his death. Trenchard's power to please was not of the assertive kind; it was rather the absence of this quality which gave him his principal charm. A certain gentleness, which is always gracious and captivating in a manly man, was the character uppermost in his relations with women. But perhaps too much of this quality is not good in a man, at least if it be evidence of any lack of inward strength. Not that there was any suspicion of weakness in Trenchard in his outward life; he had proved himself an excellent officer, assiduous in the discharge of all duties, and never tempted to carelessness or slothfulness by the knowledge that he was in no way dependent on the salary which the Government paid him quarterly. The

weak spot in him, which has been discovered to the reader, and which he himself discovered to Dora, was neither known to, nor suspected by, any of those with whom he had official or social relations. And how far this one weak spot was traceable to any flaw of character—well, that is a question which is more than problematical. Shall we, for instance, say that a man is morally weak who lives cleanly and straightforwardly for thirty years of his life, and then receiving some sudden physical shock—a cut on the head in battle, a throw in the hunting-field, or an accident in the street becomes a confirmed drunkard in six months and dies on the gallows, in a madhouse, or in the delirium tremens ward of a hospital? Trenchard had described himself as a slave to opium, but in fact it was not yet so bad with him as that; and until within two years from this time, when he had been carried home senseless from the hunting-field—to lie little better than senseless for weeks after—there would have seemed no man in the world less likely to yield his will out of his keeping at the bidding of that terrible crave, which probably none but its victims, and here and there some exceptionally enlightened physician, are able so much as to conceive.

"Go on, now, to that, now, Joe, and don't be teasin' me; what time have I to be listenin' to yer nonsense, now? And 'tis a sin, so 'tis, for ye to be thinking of such a thing, and the family boycotted and all of us to work double time."

"But 'tis the waist ye have, Norah; I can't keep my

eyes aff it anyway."

"Well, keep yer arm aff it, avick, if ye can't keep yer eyes."

"But haven't I yer word, Norah, me darlint, that ye'd

be after lettin' me coort ye by-and-by?"

"Maybe, I did; but, sure, by-and-by's by-and-by, and I'll not spake kindly to ye at all if ye go moiderin' me that way."

"And ye'll not be namin' the day, Norah, maybe?"

"Ah, will ye hear the boy, an' him not out of his

teens? A nice thing I'd do to go trust myself to a

gossoon like you."

"Faith! and amn't I nearly two years beyant you, Norah Crina? It isn't so long but ye wor a sweet slip of a girl runnin' wid yer little bare feet along the boreen. Give me a kiss, Norah dear."

"Is it here in the field, and broad daylight? 'Deed,

But apparently this protest was cut short, and a moment later Norah, with very red cheeks and her black eyes flashing with I don't know what emotion, appeared on the top of the stile, with Joe behind carrying hayforks.

Their conversation under the shelter of the hedge had interrupted Dora's reflections as she sat beside the

pond waiting for the hay-forks to arrive.

Joe, a short, sturdy, handsome youth, had a very sheepish air when he caught sight of Dora, not knowing how much of his gallantry she might have overheard. But pretty Norah's countenance was as innocent as milk as she offered Dora a pitchfork and a courtesy.

"An' how are ye goin' to use it, my lady?" asked Norah, with reference to that rather formidable implement. "'Tis the smallest myself and Joe could diskiver."

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Dora; "you'll have

to teach me, Norah, or Joe, perhaps."

Joe, who had "refuged himself" at Norah's elbow, received a scarcely perceptible but angry little dig from that plump, and doubtless dimpled, portion of Norah's person; an intimation which conveyed a world of meaning to Joe, namely, that if any one were to be instructed by him in the art and mystery of hay-tossing it was Norah and not Dora, and that he had better take care what he was about.

"My Lady Kitty's down there below, ma'am," went on Norah, "and her ladyship can toss hay like one of

the boys, so she can."

Whether this were intended as a form of reproach to Dora, or merely an innocent expression of the sentiment common to most Irish servants, that their own particular

families are the best in the country at anything and everything, Dora did not stay to ask herself. She strolled down the field with her fork in her hand to where Kitty was busily plying hers, her eyes and her delicate brunette's

skin shaded by a cool white linen bonnet.

"Mrs. Lytton, you really mustn't attempt it," said Kitty; "it makes your back ache, and your hands blister, like anything. I never have so mean an opinion of myself as when I am beaten all to nothing in trying to do some ridiculously simple thing like this, which people brought up more sensibly than we are stand to all day without flinching."

"I am afraid I shall be only too ready to echo that speech by-and-by," answered Dora; "but let's see how

long we can stand it at all events."

Norah, with Joe at her heels, had moved off a little way in front, and her straight, supple figure swayed with a nice rhythmic motion as her fork rapidly turned and tossed the hay, her strong and shapely arms glistening in the sun, every turn of her figure displaying a natural and energetic grace. Dora instinctively watched her, and so by-and-by did Kitty, and a spirit of emulation seized both of them at the same time. Half unconsciously they entered into competition with Norah, and a little more consciously, perhaps, into competition with Kitty had evidently begun with the notion that whatever might be Norah's merits in the hay-field, her own were at all events superior to Dora's; Joe, being a man, was of course not taken into account. So the three girl folk worked, turning and tossing, and they worked without chattering.

Norah, with one bright eye upon the hay and the other on Joe, to see that his eyes wandered no further than

his fork, was sufficiently occupied.

Kitty was wondering whether Arthur would be all the day in the corn-field. But Kitty was not uneasy; there were no forebodings in her mind, and there needed none. She had no cause for doubts, none for misgivings. Everything always went smoothly with Kitty; the only sorrow of her little life had been Arthur's two years'

entombment in Africa, and now that he was restored to her she was as happy as the bees that hummed around, and occasionally alighted on, her sun-bonnet. Anthony might be as surly as he pleased; Kitty was perfectly assured that his surliness would not endure. The pleasant little estate of Gravelmount bounded her horizon; she and Arthur were to settle down there, and there live

delightfully all their lives.

Dora had never, at any period of her existence, forecast the future in this simple idyllic fashion. Neither did she do so at present. Indeed, a monotony of domestic bliss—a settled and ordered routine of commonplace felicity—was a prospect to which her inclinations did not particularly tend. She liked to feel that she was moving. She liked the impetuous flow and variety of a life in which she herself had something active to do. Prosperous or otherwise, she found no contentment in inaction. On the other hand she wanted to taste prosperity now. What of prosperous was there in that future which she felt assured a word of hers would change from future into present?

Well, to begin with, her new lover was clearly an upright and a faithful man. That was a fair entry to start the page with. He was rich, and likely to remain so, and that was a good entry to follow with. But the entry to come first on the opposite page was one to pause over when it had been written down. What a world of

troublous thought that entry stirred in her.

But there was something heroic about Dora. Whatever motive at any time impelled her, whether love or duty (though love was always a stronger motive with her than duty), no difficulty in the way towards a desired end was able to cow or daunt her. Love began to impel her along the path that faced her here, but she felt within her another impulse also. She had stood twice betwixt Trenchard and his less noble self; so at least he told her, and had helped him to the mastery. If she let Trenchard love her might she continue to do what she had already done for him?

"I believe it would do me good to do a little good to

somebody," she said to herself in that half contemptuous way in which she always viewed herself upon her moral side.

Trenchard cured—imagine that already done—the future certainly seemed a fair one for Dora as his wife. But suppose she should marry him and not succeed in blotting out that second entry after all? Did she care enough about the solid comforts of a solid income to embrace them with the possibility (not to be lightly ignored) that they might have to be enjoyed in the society of a hopeless narcomaniac? You see, Dora was able at present to view the matter on all sides in that cool deliberate spirit in which she generally viewed all things that concerned her own material well-being; for she had not yet been brought quite under the spell of This spell was working in her and around her, but it had yet to be completed. But the more seriously she thought upon the matter the clearer it became to herself that the day was not distant when she might be willing to face much, and risk much-even all-for Trenchard; and not for his riches, but for Trenchard himself.

She ceased thinking, imperatively compelled to do so by a terrible ache in her back, and a sensation that blisters were beginning to rise on her hands. Though she had been doing her haymaker's work in a desperately mechanical style, she had been doing it constantly and even energetically, and the sun had been growing hotter and hotter. She continued a moment or two longer while she took a side glance at her companion. Kitty—who had played at haymaking a good deal oftener than Dora and who besides had a stake in the crop, which Dora had not—was still tossing; but happening to look round their eyes met and both girls threw down their forks with a laugh.

"It was dreadfully mean of me," exclaimed Kitty,

"but I was just trying to tire you out."

"Well, you've done it," laughed Dora. "My back and shoulders and arms have all given in at once."

"Mine would have given in five minutes ago if I'd

have let them; but just look at Norah, she's as fresh as when she began. I vote we leave Norah and Joe and go and sit under the trees till lunch comes; mamma and Barbara ought to be out with it directly, and I never was so hungry in my life."

"Well, I'm almost afraid to go near the pond," said

Dora; "for I feel as if I could drink a river."

"After lunch," said Kitty, "if we are any way fit for another stroke, we'll begin to rake it into rows and that's not half so hard."

"Here comes the lunch," cried Dora, as the flapping straw hat of Lady Frayne appeared on the other side of

the stile.

"Well, we won't keep that waiting long," said Kitty; "there's Miss Nugent with mamma, and they've got the donkey with them, I declare."

"Well, young ladies," said Lady Frayne, as Kitty and Dora came up to them, "are you for a mouthful of any-

thing?"

"They look dead beat, the pair of them," said Barbara.

"What have you got in those baskets?" said Kitty, pointing to a couple of great baskets slung on either side of the donkey.

"Is there anything to drink, Lady Frayne?" asked

Dora, subsiding into a pile of hay.

"There is, to be sure, if we can find it; 'tis Barbara did the packing, and we've left the house with not a soul in it."

"But don't forget the policeman in the garden," added Barbara.

"And you've actually got an escort with you," said Kitty under her breath, for as she spoke three constables appeared at a turning in the lane, and advancing a little further stood still.

"There are four men over from the barracks," said Lady Frayne; "'twas Mr. Graham sent them and we're to keep them as long as we like, though how we're to feed and lodge them, I don't know, unless we make a housemaid of Joe. But I'm taking them down to the corn-field now, anyway. Hadn't we better go on there with the luncheon?"

But this last proposal was answered by a wail from

Kitty and a groan from Dora.

"Well, if you're so bad as that," said Lady Frayne, "you can eat as you go along."

Kitty and Dora clambered over the stile and applied

themselves to the baskets without more ado.

"Eat fairly, now," said Lady Frayne, "for there are more mouths than yours to feed. Barbara, can ye help Mrs. Lytton out with that cork?"

"See here, Sarah," said Barbara, "isn't it much better for us to send up to the corn-field and bring the men

over here?"

"That's the best thing, certainly," said Lady Frayne; "we can take the donkey" (her ladyship called it dunkey) "in here and spread these things out under the trees. There's not an inch of shelter in the cornfield," and beckoning to the constables she dispatched one of the trio on this errand. The other two followed the ladies into the meadow where Norah and Joe were still at work.

"Norah, you're a great girl," cried Lady Frayne at the top of her voice; "I'll be doing something grand for you one of these days. Put down your forks, you and Joe, and come up here till ye get something to eat."

Luncheon was spread under the trees, on the edge of the cool dark pond; the gigantic policemen discovering a surprising aptitude as footmen. Lady Frayne, who was too stout to sit down in the hay, had brought her camp stool, which was propped up for her against a tree. She pulled off her great hat and fanned herself vigorously while ordering and surveying the preparations. By the time luncheon was ready Arthur and Trenchard, with Peter, the butler and policeman behind them, arrived from the corn-field.

"Where's Anthony?" asked Lady Frayne.

"He left us a while ago," said Arthur; "he'll send John over this afternoon and be back himself before

evening, he said. He has something or other to look after at home."

"Humph!" grunted Lady Frayne, "he has great doings of his own up there these times. What's he at, at all, Barbara?"

"Don't be asking me, Sarah, for I know no more

than yourself."

Dora observed that Trenchard looked pale and tired and knew that he was not sufficiently recovered for such unwonted work under a broiling sun, for the September sun was almost tropical that day.

Trenchard had placed himself near to her at once, and with a scarcely perceptible motion of her hand she

signed to him, and he went nearer.

Presently Wilson, the butler, whose unwonted duties in the corn-field had made his hand a little shaky, let a plate fall with a crash.

Under cover of this disturbance Dora turned half round towards Trenchard, but without looking at him,

and said:

"The sun is very hot. Take care of yourself."

"Thank you; I will do so," answered Trenchard in the same suppressed tone.

"Well, how did ye get on," inquired Lady Frayne;

"are ye saving my crop for me amongst ye?"

"Oh, bedad, we are, my lady," replied Peter, "an' a great crop 'twill be, barrin' the unbeknown."

"That's well," replied her ladyship. "Wilson, my

poor man, ye have a very fatigued appearance."

"I have, me lady," replied Wilson resignedly. "But I wouldn't ask to look better than my betters," with a confidential glance at Kitty and Dora who were barely able to sit upright.

Luncheon, however, put a new heart into everybody, and when the marching orders were given again there were no murmurings. Trenchard took his leave, the rest went back to work, Lady Frayne and Barbara wielding their rakes beside Kitty and Dora.

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

#### BAFFLED CURIOSITY.

In the afternoon Dora showed signs of giving out.

"Do, now, go home, like a good woman," said Lady Frayne. "You've done more than a day's work, and I declare I'm grateful to you; but I'll have Barbara to reckon with as well as yourself (to say nothing of Anthony) if you take any harm. We'll all be going home in an hour, and there's really no cause for you to stay."

The others added their voices to Lady Frayne's, and when Dora had made a proper show of willingness to wait till the hour was up, she ceased to protest, and took her leave.

Kitty was for mounting her on the donkey, but Dora would have none of that sleek beast. She strolled home leisurely through the fields, skirting, as she went, the corner of the bog where she had first met Trenchard.

It wanted an hour of dinner-time when she reached Carriconna. She was going rather lazily and wearily up through the grounds when just as she approached the tower, Anthony came out of it, his clothes all dusty and brick-stained, and went on to the house.

He did not see her, and Dora sheltered herself behind the tower until he had entered the house. Then she followed and went up to her own room without meeting him. None of them had discovered any clue to the mysterious proceedings of Anthony in the tower. Dora's thoughts turned frequently to this subject, but she was quite as much in the dark as the rest. Suddenly the notion struck her to take her own key and go down to the tower and explore for herself. She promptly descended and after a turn or two on the terrace, for the purpose of reconnoitring, she walked slowly down to the tower, having satisfied herself that no one was in sight. She turned the key in the lock, but the door did not give; the lock was a patent one,

which always worked with perfect ease, and after Dora had given the door a push or two she could only conclude that it was fastened from the inside and the bolts shot, for Anthony's precautions had included bolts as well as a patent lock. Evidently Anthony himself had returned to the tower, but why had he locked himself in? It was the first time that Dora's key had not availed to give her admission. Here were dark doings indeed.

"What in the world is the man doing?" thought Dora; "he doesn't want to lock himself in for any telescopic purpose."

She retreated a step or two and looked up to the top of the tower. No one was there; and the telescope had evidently not been removed from its wooden shelter.

"Now is it really Uncle Anthony who is inside, or can

anybody else have got hold of his key?"

The obvious reflection succeeding this query was, that she had better take up some safe position in the background and watch for awhile.

There was a bench under the garden wall just against the lake which commanded a side view of the tower door, without being visible itself from that point. seated herself there and watched the door. In no long time her patience was rewarded; the door opened and Anthony himself came out. He had in his hand the old portmanteau which always accompanied him to Dublin; but, from the manner in which he carried it. the portmanteau was evidently empty. He went back to the house, his unconcerned and open manner showing he had no suspicion that any one had returned from Dovne. Still keeping her seat Dora saw him leave the house again in a few moments and go down the drive. He was no doubt returning to Doyne. But it wanted now only about twenty minutes to the Carriconna dinner hour, and he would probably meet Barbara on the road. But Dora's curiosity had now reached such a point of intensity, that she did not pause to ask herself how soon ner uncle might return.

Leaving the bench under the wall she made at once.

for the tower. The lock yielded as easily as before, and this time the door also.

Dora peered curiously around, expecting to see she did not in the least know what. She saw nothing at all that she had not seen before, in fact, nothing was ever to be seen on the ground floor of the tower but a few bare stones and lumps and scraps of fallen masonry; the whole floor very faintly illumined by two long narrow slits that faced each other in the walls, over which the ivy had grown without, and through which Anthony's forerunners had shot with arrows at their besiegers. Dora was properly amazed, there was not a trace to be seen of any proceedings on Anthony's part requiring the safety and secrecy of locked doors. The ground floor was just as Dora had always known it.

Then it occurred to her, might Anthony have been preparing some little surprise for them overhead, where the telescope was lodged. She mounted to the top floor.

Since Dora's first visit to the upper region of the tower, a convenient broad-stepped ladder, with a hand-rail, had been fixed to give access to the arched stone floor of the observatory, a convenience which even Barbara had been persuaded to make use of more than once. One half of this storey had been fitted up in a pretty and rather luxurious style, under the direction of Anthony, who had drawn his inspiration from Dora. It was a thatched shelter, resembling a section of an old-fashioned summer house, a fine-weather retreat with low, broad, cushioned seats, and skin rugs over the stone floor, with a rustic table on which afternoon tea was sometimes served to the many curious visitors who mounted to inspect for themselves the telescope that had been so much discussed in the neighbourhood. The telescope itself was housed in a sort of miniature châlet, with a revolving roof, furnished with shutters which opened on all points of the compass. Dora looked about her, but there was no change in the observatory since she had visited it on the previous day. Anthony's occupation, whatever it might have been, could scarcely have taken him to this

part of the tower, for when Dora looked in to where the telescope stood, she saw that it remained on precisely the same spot on which she had left it the night before. She went down again, and before quitting the tower, stood for a few moments on the lower floor, her eyes seeking to pierce the gloom that lay at the back of the great stone staircase.

There were, or seemed to be, marks as though some one had been moving the scattered stone blocks which lay there. Dora went over to the place and stooped down. Certainly some one had been at work there.

Just then she heard the sound of wheels on the drive, and knew that the car had returned from the Abbey. A sudden terror of her uncle's presence, such as she had never felt before, seized her. Anthony might return to his lair at any moment. Dora rose up quickly, opened the door of the tower, and locked it behind her as she went out.

She had arrived at something, whether real or imagi-

nary, which her fancy would feed upon.

Anthony had a secret of some sort in the tower and Dora was on its track. True, the track was faint, almost to illegituity, but Dora was satisfied to have discovered it. Opportunity would serve, sooner or later, for a further investigation. No one saw her leave the tower; though for that matter the key, which Anthony himself had given her, was her sanction for going in and out of it as she pleased.

Miss Nugent was just alighting from the car, rather

stiff and aching, as Dora ran up to assist her.

"Well, you were well to go when you did," said Barbara drawing a long breath of relief as she gained a chair in the hall.

"Why, you've not had any mishaps, I hope," said Dora.

."Oh, no, indeed, nothing of that sort; but 'tis a torment of a task when you're not used to it. Are you getting rested yourself, my dear?"

"Oh, I'm ready to begin again now," said Dora,

whose recuperative power seldom failed her; "have

they made good progress?"

"The greatest," answered Miss Nugent. "I declare I believe, if the weather holds out, they'll manage in perfect style. Arthur and the men are going on till dark; and Arthur will stay at Doyne the night. I wonder have they dinner ready for us? Anthony talks of starting for Dublin early to-morrow, and we'll none of us be sorry to get early to bed."

"Then I shall have the tower to myself to-morrow," thought Dora as she went upstairs to dress for dinner.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

#### THE FALL.

On the afternoon of the day with which we have been concerned, Trenchard, as he had told Dora, had an affair of official business ten miles away. That disposed of, it occurred to him to make a semi-official visit to the police barracks at the little town of Knockdrum, two miles farther on. From the barracks he went to the quarters of the district inspector, who was on the point of sitting down to dinner and who had little difficulty in persuading his chief to dine with him.

Trenchard had scarcely broken his fast since morning; he had taken but a mouthful of lunch in the hay-field, and the fatigue of the morning's work, the long ride in the afternoon and the tedium of a long meeting in the magistrate's room of a stuffy court house, added to the slight weakness in the head from which he was still suffering, had exhausted him considerably. Both by habit and inclination he was extremely sparing in his drink, but on this evening he was under strong temptation to exceed his usual moderate quantity.

The district inspector, a young man with some private means, kept a little cellar of a better quality than

common. He had laid in a new Burgundy that very day, and it proved to be well worth its cork. Trenchard drank some two or three glasses more than his wont. The half pledge which it pleased his fancy to imagine he had given Dora stood to him as a kind of fictitious strength. He thought himself perfectly safe from excess of any kind. Pressed to fill his glass again he declined. He thought that he had taken precisely the amount he had decided to take, and was resolved to drink no more.

It was past nine o'clock when he set out on his twelve mile ride to Moyrath. After the great heat of the day, the night air seemed unusually chill. Trenchard felt its effects in his head almost immediately. not ridden half a mile before he felt a sudden and terrible longing for opium. The district inspector's house lay about half a mile out of the little town of Knockdrum, and Trenchard was just entering it. that hour it was dark and deserted; a silent little place. the shops and houses together forming a wide square. with the court house in the centre. The misty light of a half moon fell on the pink and white and yellow houses and on the stones that paved the square. the shops were shut, but as Trenchard rode slowly across the square he cast an involuntary glance towards one corner of it, where the chemist's shop was situated. The shutters of the shop were up, but a light streamed through the open doorway, and Trenchard saw John Nibberd, the chemist, in his black velvet smoking cap. smoking his pipe upon the doorstep. What Trenchard would have given at that moment to be standing in the chemist's place, within reach of the sweet poison he craved. Again, he would have given twenty pounds had the chemist's shop been shut like the rest.

He slackened his horse's pace to a walk and thus traversed the town. When level with the last house he drew the rein again and his horse stood still Trenchard's condition both physical and mental was such as cannot easily be described. It was five days since opium in any form had passed his lips, and he had been

swept on a sudden by one of those scarce controllable gusts of passionate desire which are experienced only by

the victims of alcohol or opium.

There are moments when the divinity within us has a maniac in charge. Trenchard's will had melted. He was for a moment outside the pale of reason. He turned in his saddle, the figure of the chemist was still visible in the doorway of his shop. Then Trenchard saw him knock the ashes out of his pipe and retire within the shop. He put his horse round and rode straight to the chemist's. He and the chemist knew each other well.

Nibberd was a man considerably superior to his station. He had commenced as an army surgeon, and coming in for a legacy of a few thousands, had left soldiering and turned his attention to speculation. His ventures failing one after the other, he put his small remaining capital into the little business at Knockdrum, where in the course of years he had acquired a comfortable competency. He was a book lover in an unobtrusive way, and a companionable gossip, and Trenchard never had business in the town without giving him a

call.

"Are you there, John?"

The chemist came out to his door.

"Why, now, is that you, sir?" said he. "Are you going home at this hour? It's close on ten o'clock, and you're twelve miles from home."

"I've been to the barracks and had dinner with

Webb," answered Trenchard. "Any news, John?"

"Plenty, sir," said John; "plenty. But small news. Poor stuff, poor stuff. I'm glad to see you about again so soon. I heard you got a nasty knock the other evening."

"So I did; but I'm pretty nearly over it now.

believe I'm feeling it a little bit to night, though."

"So! and with that ride before you, sir; why, and

you do look pale, I declare."

"The air will pick me up again directly," his hand twitching nervously on the reins.

"Will you take a little whisky and water?"

"N-no." said Trenchard hesitatingly. "I'm no whisky drinker, John. But-"

"Just so, sir," said the chemist; "I'll mix you a little draught."

"That's better," answered Trenchard.

The chemist knew nothing of Trenchard's opium habit, and Trenchard dared not ask him for the drug.

"Give me something pretty strong," he said; "my head is in a kind of whirl. What are you putting in it?"

"There's a dash of ether in it, sir."

"Put a few drops of morphia," said Trenchard.

"There, sir," said Nibberd, handing a glass to Tren-

chard, "that'll make you comfortable."

It was a fairly strong draught, but Trenchard drank it down like milk. It had little effect but to give a keener edge to the crave that was on him.

"How's that, sir?" asked Nibberd.

"I'll tell you what, John," replied Trenchard; "you might give me a little laudanum in a bottle to rub on my head if I should feel the need of anything going home.

Maguire used that the other day."

"To be sure, sir," replied John; "to be sure. good thing for the nerves when it's used properly. But," he added, chuckling, "it isn't everybody I should give a bottle of laudanum to at this time of night. don't forget and take it inwardly, Mr. Trenchard. not keep you. It's too late to give you the news now,

and small news, too. Poor stuff, poor stuff."

Trenchard rode away with the phial of laudanum in his pocket. There was a wild sense of triumph within him. All scruple, all effort at restraint had by this time been utterly overborne. He was conscious of nothing but that he longed for opium and that he had a bottle of it in his pocket. The sense of possession stimulated the crave, but in a pleasant fashion now; and Trenchard knew that in the circumstances and situation he must act with prudence. Experience had taught him to know all the stages of the opiised state. It would not do for him to drink immediately; it would be nearly an hour and a half before he could reach home, and he must

guard against stupor on the road.

He waited for half-an-hour. During all that time he never once wavered in his resolution. His passion was fixed upon the drug, and it is doubtful whether any influence could at that moment have checked his determination to gratify it. Reducing his horse to a walk, he took the phial from his pocket and held it up against the moon. The bottle contained about two draughts of the quantity he had been lately in the habit of taking. He resolved to take a half-dose only, that is to say, a quarter of the contents of the phial. Measuring the amount with his finger on the phial, he uncorked and drank it. He did not pass by a hair's breadth the limit he had given himself, and returned the bottle to his pocket. Then he rode on again at a brisker pace.

Had one been riding beside him, it would have been curious to note the swift and decisive effect which the draught produced in Trenchard. In considerably less than five minutes he was another man. He had left Nibberd pale, nervous and trembling, wild and disordered. The potent poison seemed to collect and focus all the forces within him, mental and bodily. pallor vanished from his face; a warm flush succeeded it. The eyes kindled and shone with unnatural brilliancy. His hand was firmer on the rein, he sat more upright in the saddle. These outward signs expressed the strange new vigour within him, called up on the

instant by the magic poison.

Dora had been in Trenchard's thoughts all that after-It is an effect of opium that the subject uppermost in the mind at the moment when the draught is swallowed or the pipe smoked, continues to be dominant, but with an intensity a hundred times greater. pleasant fancy becomes a vision of delight, and the vision an absolute reality.

The possessed man rode and dreamed of the woman he loved, and never had she seemed so beautiful or so gracious as she showed herself at that moment to his mental eye. And she loved him too; this seemed now a fact as certain as her beauty and her graciousness. All doubt was dispelled; she loved him as he loved her. He was carried up into the wonderful cloudland of opium; all his senses expanded; if he thought of earth for an instant, it was but to mock himself for his folly in having attempted to shut himself out from the paradise he was lifted into.

The first stage, the stage of brilliant elation and excitement, passed. The second stage had none of the masterful intensity of the first, but was equally entrancing. It was the stage of repose, sweet and shadowless repose; not a troublous thought arising; a lull of all the senses, wherein one's little corner of the world becomes another lotus land. They loved each other still, Dora and he; they were married now, and their life was of

unbroken happiness.

The second stage began to pass; Trenchard felt himself sinking. Having taken what was for him so small a dose, he had little need to dread the third and final stage, the stage of torpor. But a little numbness began to creep over him, and he was still three miles from home. He took out the phial again and drank about a quarter of a dose; it revived him instantly. The vision of extravagant joy returned; he was again the beloved of the woman whom he loved. He turned into the old coach road leading to the gates of Moyrath. Suddenly the thought of his servant rose up before him. But being now so wholly under the influence of the drug, the thought was scarcely disquieting. It only prompted in him the cunning which, sooner or later, becomes a chief trait of the opium eater's character. He knew that the sergeant would be waiting for him. Well. what of that? He had only to speak quietly, and show himself a little less happy than he felt.

A hundred yards or so from the gates he brought his horse to a walk again, that he might grow cool and quiet, but the trained eye of the sergeant, keen to know every aspect of his master's face, was not readily deceived. He knew in a moment what was behind the brightness of his master's eyes. He knew that when his master

went out that morning he had not tasted opium for five days. The sergeant had expected him home jaded, dispirited, worn and fretful. He came instead with his old gentle smile, dismounted lightly, and had a pleasant word on his lips. The sergeant's heart was sore. Had his master entered pale and out of temper he would have been happy, for he would have known that the pledge was still unbroken.

"Go to bed, William," said Trenchard cheerily; "I am going myself immediately. I went on to Knockdrum and dined with Mr. Webb; that's the reason I'm

so late."

"You seem wonderfully well to-night, sir," said the

sergeant in a quiet tone, of sufficient significance.

"Yes," said Trenchard. "Yes; I am feeling be ter to-night. Go to bed, William; go to bed. No further news from Doyne, I suppose?"

" None, sir."

"Good night, William."

"Good-night, sir," said the sergeant almost severely.

Sergeant Jones led the horse round to the stables. Trenchard went in and barred the door. He retired to his own room almost immediately, carrying his phial with him.

"I am a new man to-night," said he. "I know now what is best for me."

But the stage of torpor came at length.

# CHAPTER XXX.

#### THE LETTER.

DORA awoke the next morning with an abundant interest in life. She thought of her interview with Trenchard on the previous day. It imparted a pleasant warmth to her first reflections. She might see Trenchard again that day; she would hear of him, at all events. Then as she was dressing she heard the big voice of Anthony inquiring whether any breakfast were to be had, and her chief project for the day recurred to her with a more poignant interest, as she finished dressing. The key of the tower lay on her dressing table and seemed invested with some of the mystery that surrounded Anthony. She put it in

her pocket as she went down.

The excitement of breakfast was a note which Arthur had sent over from Doyne. Arthur said that Joe had been refused provisions which he had been sent to purchase in Doyne the previous evening. The shops had declined to sell to the Abbey. The letter was to Barbara, who was entreated to put together what groceries and other provender of that sort she could spare and bring them over herself on the car, since Arthur did not think it safe to intrust them to Joe, who might be prevented from getting them home. It was lucky that the store room at Carriconna was more amply furnished than it had been in bygone days. Miss Nugent, with suggestions from Dora, made out a list during breakfast of various commodities likely to be useful in a siege, but the principal question related to butcher's meat.

"There are four constables to feed, as you know," wrote Arthur, "and her ladyship is afraid that the fowl

yard will fail her."

"What can we do for meat for them, Anthony?" said Barbara; "there's a mutton ham hanging below will do them for to-day, and I think Kate might spare one of the geese she's fattening, but they'll want something more than that in a day or two. Arthur says the carrier won't carry for them either, and they can't go foraging at a distance till the crops are settled with."

"I'll have a sheep killed for them at once," said Anthony; "I don't know but we'll be boycotted ourselves for helping them; but what do I care for that? I'll

buy up half England to help me if I want."

"We'll think of that another time," said his sister.

"Will you kill them a sheep?"

"I will, of course I'll send M'Laughlin over as I'm going to the station."

M'Laughlin was the old local butcher who came over at irregular intervals with his weapons and his blue

smock, to do the killing for the table.

"I don't know whether I oughtn't to stay at home myself," added Anthony, with an air and in a tone of reluctant duty. Barbara's ear caught that significant inflection.

"Ah, I don't think ye need," said she; "Arthur knew you were going to town this morning, and if there'd been

any great need for you he'd have said so."

"Do you think he would?" said Anthony anxiously.
"To be sure he would. Sure, won't Mrs. Lytton and I go over and give them a hand after breakfast?"

"Maybe Mrs. Lytton is not equal to the fields again?"

said Anthony.

"Oh, yes, I am," said Dora, cogitating in herself how she might escape that not too congenial labour of love. Then she remembered that Trenchard would almost certainly visit Doyne again that day and was reconciled.

But how to carry out the project concerning the tower? It must be postponed, at all events until later in the day, when some propitious chance might happen.

Anthony not too unwillingly, though with a fair show of reluctance, accepted his sister's assurance that he would not be needed at the Abbey that day, and made his start for Dublin. As usual he gave no reasons for his journey, other than his invariable formula that he had a trifle of business in hand. His people were left to find what satisfaction they might in that vague declaration, which was the less acceptable that these "trifles of business," whatever they might be, appeared to have become the absorbing interest of Anthony's existence.

He started immediately after breakfast, driving on a neighbour's car to the station. Dora passed the morning in no great contentment. Her relations with Kitty and Lady Frayne had always come short of cordiality, and greater frequency of intercourse had no ripening effect on them. The sun was as hot as ever; Trenchard did not come; and the key in Dora's pocket

seemed trying to draw her like a magnet back to the tower. She was growing positively out of temper, and as Dora never permitted herself an ebullition of that sort, she summoned her philosophy to assist her to dissemble. Then she was vexed with herself for being vexed at Trenchard's non-appearance. Then she grew uneasy on his account; what more likely than that he should be suffering from his over-exertion in yesterday's heat, and Dora remembered that he had a long afternoon's work of his own to get through after he left her.

She dreaded some relapse, should he have returned home at night exhausted and weak. The picnic lunch, served under the trees as before, bored her unspeakably. The strongly self-assertive humour of her hostess was never less than a trial to Dora's nerves, and this morning it made her quite cross, though she continued to smile her sweetest. Barbara's unruffled equanimity in all situations and circumstances only discomposed her the more, and it was perfectly exasperating to be obliged to watch without seeming to do so the placid raptures of Kitty and Arthur, billing and cooing remorselessly under her eyes.

"What about those three men that were taken at Carriconna the other night, did they come up for trial

yet?" asked Lady Frayne.

"No, but I think they are to be brought up in about a week," answered Arthur; "I have been trying to persuade his worship to come forward as little as possible in that matter; and since he has cooled down I think he'll be more or less amenable; but the worst of it is, you see, the matter is out of our hands entirely. It's very well they have as good a fellow as Trenchard to deal with."

"'Tis so, indeed," assented Lady Frayne.

"What men are they?" asked Kitty.

"One of the turf stealers is amongst them," said Arthur; "he's a Carriconna tenant. Another is Cassidy from Gravelmount, and the third is a tenant of Trenchard's. He has had notice to quit, I am sorry to say." "A nice little kettle of fish, upon my word," said Lady Frayne.

"Talking of Mr. Trenchard," said Barbara, "isn't this

his sergeant?"

Dora's heart gave a little leap at the moment at which Sergeant Jones leaped the stone fence bounding the field.

The sergeant came towards them, stepping out according to custom as though the whole world were a parade ground; saluted and presented a note to Lady Frayne. Then he faced about on his heel to Dora, laid his hand on the pocket of his coat, and drew out, as if it were a bayonet, a small paper parcel.

"The book the master said he promised you, ma'am,"

said the sergeant.

"Thank you, sergeant," said Dora quietly; perfectly aware that Trenchard had promised her no book at all.

"Well, Sarah," said Barbara, "Mr. Trenchard's not

coming, I suppose?"

"He says he's not very well," said Lady Frayne, reading the letter at half arm's length through her glasses. "He says he has sent a better man to take his place; that's you, sergeant, I suppose."

Sergeant Jones answered with a salute, but no smile broke the firm line of his close-set lips. The sergeant

was even graver than ordinary.

"There is something wrong at home," thought Dora, and burned for an opportunity to look within the paper cover of her parcel.

"There's a letter here," she thought; "how I wish all these tiresome people would go and leave me here.

Bother their boycotting!"

They did go presently, but Dora had to go with them. She had not even the opportunity of a surreptitious word with the sergeant, who marched off with Peter, Wilson and the constables, under Arthur's charge, to the corn-field.

Within an hour after luncheon the hay was ready for carting; it had been a sorely tedious hour to Dora. The good Barbara, however, was not unmindful of her.

She knew that Dora's relish for field work was of the most moderate, and devised an excuse to set her free.

"You're are getting tired again, my dear," she said privately to Dora, "there's not a bit of need for ye to stay; maybe there might be callers at home too. You can slip off quietly without saying a word to any one; I'll make your excuses."

Lady Frayne and the others were at an opposite corner of the field; Dora and Barbara were near the

stile.

"But aren't you getting tired too?" said Dora.

"Not a bit; there's a great deal of toughness in me. Go home now like a good girl, and don't make any excuses. Shall Joe drive ye, or will you walk by the fields?"

"Oh, no, I won't take Joe from his work; I'd every bit as soon walk. Good-bye, then, and take good care

of yourself."

"Now that's one of the best-hearted girls in the world," said Barbara to herself, as Dora disappeared over the stile.

When the young widow had put a field or two between herself and the workers whom she had left, she untied and opened Trenchard's parcel. As she had supposed it contained a letter.

Trenchard had written this letter to her an hour before. He had passed in quick succession through the states of bliss and woe which, in alternation, make up the opium eater's existence. We saw him lately in the former of these two states.

On the morning of the day we are dealing with his servant, the sergeant found him sleeping heavily long after his usual hour. Had the servant not detected his master's condition at the instant when he reached home the night before, he could have been little deceived as to the nature of the sleep in which Trenchard was locked at nine o'clock that morning.

The handsome gentle face, pale and somewhat shrunken, the pupil of the eye, when the sergeant cautiously raised the eyelid, contracted to less than a quarter of its normal size, these were the unmistakable tokens of the torpor of opiism. Sergeant Jones at once went down and told his wife.

"But how did he get it?" said the housekeeper;
you said you were sure he took none with him when

he went out yesterday."

"I don't know where he got it," answered the sergeant, but that isn't the question at present. I must bring him round again, I think."

"Couldn't you leave him awhile, William? It'll be a dreadful time for him when he wakes, you know," said

the motherly woman.

"It's only putting it off a bit; there's no good in that.

He'll have to wake now or by-and-by."

"It's a dreadful thing," said his wife piteously, rocking herself to and fro in her chair. "To fight against it all these days, as we've seen him doing, and then be beaten back like this, and just have to begin it all over again."

The sergeant was a strong man himself; the straight path of duty had been an easy one to him all his life; he had no clear understanding of the weaknesses by which natures less simple and less vigorous are betrayed; but he had seen his master do sturdy battle with himself in this sad business, and he answered:

"Yes, it is; I know it. And there's those that wouldn't try to stand up against it again. But he will, the master will, even after this. I'll go and wake him."

He went upstairs again to Trenchard's room. He thought it probable that it would be necessary for him, as he had done before, to administer a fresh dose of opium, to bring the sleeper to himself again.

Opening the door he saw that Trenchard was awake. The sergeant went over to him at once, and in a tone as

if nothing had been the matter said:

"You're not looking quite yourself, sir, better wait till

I get you a cup of coffee."

Trenchard half rising in bed, his face colourless and drawn, his eyes almost glassy, made a motion with his hand towards the dressing table; the phial of opium

which he had taken from the chemist the night before, and which still contained a small quantity of the liquid, stood upon the dressing table. Sergeant Jones turned to fetch it. Trenchard, with his eyes, followed him hungrily. The sergeant, as he took up the bottle, read on the label the name of the Knockdrum chemist. He carried it, with a wine-glass which stood beside it, to his master's bed.

Trenchard who, all this while, had not opened his lips, a look of unutterable wretchedness on his face, never took his eyes from the sergeant. He watched him uncork the phial and pour out the remainder of the laudanum into the wine-glass. It would be impossible to express in words the mental and bodily condition of the unhappy man at that moment. During the few seconds that had passed since he signed to his servant to fetch him the opium, he had had sufficient vigour of mind to review the past and to forecast the future.

He had failed, and how terribly!

Shattered by the mad indulgence of the night before; utterly prostrate, two things alone were clear to him. He had fallen, in circumstances which made the humiliation of the fall almost unendurable, and—the desire for opium was stronger in him than ever.

Yes, and he would drink it.

At that instant he was prepared to lose all; to lose Dora, and with her the happiness, the manliness, the honour of life—to lose life itself.

"If I have failed now, there is no hope for me. I will go on as I have begun," was his bitter inward comment.

He raised himself to a sitting posture, and took the glass from the sergeant's hand.

Beyond the sergeant's first utterance, not a word had

been said on either side.

Trenchard paused with the glass raised to his lips. A sort of spasm seized him. He trembled from head to foot, till the bed shook under him. Then with a sound that was half cry and half groan, and indescribably painful to hear, he flung the glass from him, the opium

staining the wall against which the glass was shivered to pieces. He fell back in bed, whiter than before, and quite motionless.

Sergeant Jones went quietly, but quickly, out of the

room and downstairs to his wife.

"Well," said Mrs. Jones anxiously, "is he awake?"
"Yes," said her husband, "make some coffee quickly,
my dear."

"How does he seem, William?"

"Very bad," answered her husband, and described the scene that had just occurred in Trenchard's room.

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Jones, "and that's not the end of it, neither. He didn't say anything about the

doctor, I suppose?"

"Not he," answered the sergeant, "and not likely to."

"Not that a doctor's much good, anyway, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Jones, preparing the coffee while she was speaking.

"Strong," said the sergeant, "he'll want it as strong

as you can make it."

"Has he—has he any of that stuff left?"

"Not that I know of. He hadn't any in the house, to my knowledge, when he went out yesterday morning."

"Well, don't you get him any, William," said his wife

earnestly.

"Ah," said the sergeant, "that's very well to say, my dear, but you don't know what it is when he tells me how he's suffering for it. 'Just a spoonful, William,' says he, 'and I shall be better.' But," added the sergeant, "he'll not ask me for any to-day, I think. He's made his stand."

"Pray God he'll be able to keep to it," responded

Mrs. Jones.

As soon as the coffee was ready the sergeant took it

up to his master's room.

Trenchard had roused himself again. The physical craving not yet abated within him, he was evidently very ill at ease, and almost morose in his manner. This is merely a condition of the body, and one that cannot be

controlled until the nerves are strong again, and the will has regained its seat.

The sergeant, accustomed to this phase of his master's suffering, knew how to bear with it, and it was beautiful to see the gentleness with which he managed him.

Trenchard, scarcely speaking, drank his coffee and asked for a warm bath. Half an hour later he was dressed and pacing the lawn. The rush of remorse that had overtaken him, added to the state of nervous restlessness produced by the desire for a renewal of the opium which he doggedly refused to gratify, gave a kind of desperation to his thoughts. He would throw up his official position; he would leave his home and go he knew not where. He was at that pass which the narcomaniac arrives at when, feeling himself more hopelessly than ever the slave of his passion, he yet loathes his bonds and dreams of freeing himself by revolutionizing his life. But at every turn his bitter and sorrowful reflections brought him back to Dora.

What would she say?—the woman whom he loved, to whom he had dared even to whisper his love. he resolved that, what change else he must make in his life, he must renounce Dora. How he upbraided himself then for having presumed to make her feel that he loved her, as he knew that he had tried to do. should have waited till he had proved his strength. meditated long and miserably how best to take the step that now seemed the only one for honour. He would not go to see her. He distrusted himself and his resolution too much for that. Then he remembered that most likely she would be at Doyne with the Nugents that day. He decided to write a letter to her and send the sergeant with it. Returning to the house he wrote a note to Lady Frayne, excusing himself from going to her that day, on the ground of a slight indisposition. That done, he wrote to Dora.

Dora sat in a little dream, holding Trenchard's letter in her hand. Whatever one's impatience, one always dallies a little in opening the first letter. One tries to

read it mentally, or rather, perhaps, tries to read it as it would be if one had written it oneself. There is a flutter at the heart; is the letter as it should be, or is it quite a different letter? Perhaps Dora was not really in great doubt about it; after those looks, those words—could it be any letter but the one her fancy read? She turned it over in her lap, still musing pleasantly. The bright warm air tingled all around her; there was a butterfly, and a chirp and a buzz of grasshoppers and bees. had grown more than content with her life at Carriconna. Odd, how one new interest transforms and gives a different zest to life. Dora could hardly yet be said to be in love with Trenchard, but she was sufficiently concerned in him to be more than willing to remain at Carriconna. The habitual restlessness of her nature had found a new outlet in speculations more or less anxious, perhaps even more or less tender, about Trenchard and his future. In addition there was growing up in her a new and warmer feeling towards the relatives with whom she had so strangely cast in her lot. After all, was not Carriconna her home too, as well as Anthony's and Barbara's. Sometimes she wished they knew what tie of blood united her to them.

She tore open the envelope and took out the letter. It began abruptly:

"I scarcely know why I write to you or how to write. Since last night I do not know myself. Can you tell what that means? You can, I know. I am more than unworthy to be your friend, to be the friend of any woman, your friend above all. I do not know what I write. I have fallen before now, but it seems to me as if I never fell until last night. I have told you all. You will know what to think of me. My present intention is to leave work and home and—(may I say it?) you, and carry my degradation where I may. It is a just fate that lives such as mine has become should be solitary and uncared for."

The letter was not even signed. She would have had

the right to doubt it had it not been given to her by Trenchard's servant. She got up, with the letter in her hand, and went slowly home. But there was no more deluding of herself now. Was Trenchard lost to her? Lost or not, she knew when she had read the letter that she loved him as he loved her. And a bitter thought passed over her mind: "What a pair of lovers—the adventuress and the opium eater!"

As she went by the tower, going up through the grounds, she had lost all memory of the interest it had

held for her.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

#### DORA ANSWERS THE LETTER.

Anthony came home, as usual, in time for dinner. Miss Nugent had returned from the Abbey a little earlier, and Dora found them both in the drawing-room when she went down.

Dora was as full as ever of sweet amiability and good humour. She wished that Anthony had lost his train from Dublin, and that Barbara had been persuaded to stay for dinner at the Abbey; but she had her accustomed pleasant word for both of them.

It is a wise ordering of our affairs that sometimes compels us to go into company when we fancy that solitude is what we want. Dora hated telescopes and agrarian questions very cordially that night; but no doubt it was a well-devised discipline, not of her own choosing, that obliged her to feign her customary and necessary interest in the affairs of her uncle and aunt.

Barbara made one of her usual fruitless attempts to learn the attraction that drew Anthony on his periodical visits to Dublin. The meal was not a gay one, though for that matter meals at Carriconna had lately become little else than affairs of the knife and fork—" solitary ceremonies of manducation."

"How did ye get on over there to-day?" said

Anthony presently.

"We didn't do so badly at all," answered Barbara.
"The weather's doing everything possible for them, and that's a great thing."

"'Tis," said Anthony, abstractedly, "a great thing."
"Did M'Laughlin kill the sheep?" inquired Anthony,

after another pause.

"He did; and it will be over with them at the Abbey

this evening."

Some more desultory remarks, not less entertaining that the foregoing, were all the conversation the meal occasioned. Anthony's silence was nothing unwonted; Dora found it task enough to say a little for the sake of politeness, and even Barbara seemed to have some matter on her mind that would not let her talk. It was not until dinner was well over that, noticing Dora's extreme paleness, her aunt said to her:

"Mrs. Lytton, my dear, I declare you're looking quite ill. The harvesting has over-matched you altogether. Go to bed, like a good girl, and Kate shall take you up

something warm to put you to sleep."

Dora was in no way reluctant to act upon this kindly injunction. Trenchard's letter had overset her, and she longed for the quiet of her own room to take counsel with herself upon it. She escaped, and went upstairs,

When she had bade them good-night, Anthony settled to his newspaper and Barbara to her lace mending, as usual; but it was significant of the altered times that neither of them felt the ease and comfort they used to feel in the long evenings which they used to spend alone together, before Kedagh's money came. Of the two, Anthony was the more uneasy; for Barbara was busy turning over in her mind how best to broach a small matter on which she had set her heart. Perhaps Anthony was in some occult way conscious of this idea of Barbara's, and it made him restless and anxious to get out of the room. He laid down his paper presently, and removed his slippered feet from the chair on which they had been resting, preparatory to rising. Barbara,

fearful of losing her chance, plunged hurriedly into her subject.

"I'm thinking, Anthony, ye might be doing a good

turn for Sarah now."

"What's the matter with her now? Does she want a

sack of flour across, or a barrel of whiskey?"

"'Deed, I'd have sent her those without troubling you, Anthony. She's hankering to buy that little farm of Casey's, just beyond her seven-acre meadow. 'Tis in the market just now, and it would round off her estate prettily to add that on. 'Tis only a matter of £500 she tells me, and I said 'twas certain you'd lend her that much, seeing," Barbara hastened to add, "that it will come back to Arthur one day."

"How do I know it'll come back to Arthur one day?" asked Anthony peevishly. "Sarah may marry again and

leave it to her new husband."

"She can't leave Doyne away from Kitty, Anthony, we all know that," replied Barbara, mildly, "and Arthur and Kitty are born to be man and wife, I'm sure of that," she added more boldly, "so we may as well help them to their fate."

"Time enough—time enough," said Anthony, moving

restlessly about the room.

"Ye'll give Sarah a cheque then, to-morrow, Anthony?" asked Barbara, "I'm going over early and can take it with me."

"A cheque to-morrow—to-morrow," exclaimed Anthony testily. "Are all the women crazy! D'ye suppose I keep thousands of pounds in the little bank in

Dublin, Barbara?"

"Ye told me ye'd thousands there awhile ago, Anthony, and we've never had all those grand carpets a foot thick, so I supposed 'twas there still," and Barbara looked up at her brother with a humorous twinkle in her brown eyes.

But Anthony was in no humorous mood.

"Whisht!" he said, "d'ye suppose I'd waste interest and capital that way; a sensible man like meself! It's Buck ye're thinking of, Barbara." "Maybe," replied Barbara calmly. "Well, p'raps I'd best take the £500 out of my own bit, Anthony, and ye can make it right with me when your money's handy. I wouldn't like to fail Sarah now, and we so rich."

"Rich!" said Anthony; "who says we're rich? Here's Arthur asking for thousands to 'settle him,' my faith, and Mrs. Lytton taking her hundred a year and——"

Anthony was interrupted by the ringing of the front-door bell.

"Who can that be, I wonder, this time of night?" exclaimed Miss Nugent, whilst Anthony set the dining-room door ajar to hear what happened when John Maher answered the summons.

It was Sergeant Jones, with a hastily scribbled note from Trenchard, to say the men taken at Carriconna the other night were to come up for trial the next morning, and Anthony's evidence would be wanted.

Anthony went into the hall to speak to the sergeant. "Tell Mr. Trenchard I'll come. What time'll it be, sergeant?"

"The master told me to say he'd start at nine sharp, sir, and could give you a seat if you could step across to Movrath."

"I'll be there, sergeant; I'll be glad to leave John to help in the harvest; and that reminds me I must go and see what's brought in to-day," and Anthony reached down his hat and passed out with the sergeant.

Barbara folded up her work with a sigh, put away Anthony's newspaper in its place, and mechanically set back the chairs, and left the room neat and precise as it always was. She felt sad and uneasy; she sorely missed the brother with whom she had always been able to talk freely of all matters that were in her mind, whether big or little; with whom she could trustfully take counsel. For in the past, with all his queer, crotchety ways, Anthony had been what the master of a house should always be, a stout staff for the household to lean upon, the lawgiver, the final appeal, the responsible head; and Barbara felt, vaguely and unpleasantly, that in

Anthony's present absorbed state of mind, this comfortable stout staff was bending under her hand. Instead of coming back into the room—as he would have done a few months back—to discuss with his sister to the full any matter she was interested in, or uncertain about, he sidled away. But Barbara did not want as yet to look too curiously into this state of things, or to put the matter into words, even for her own counsel. It only floated in her mind, as yet, quite vaguely; it would pass in time, as other uncomfortable things had passed.

Dora did not go to bed when she retired to her room. The night being a little chilly she put a wrap round her shoulders and sat down beside her candle to read, and read again Trenchard's letter. At first she had not known what to make of it; it had come upon her with so rough a shock as to confuse all reasoning power. Now, at the interval of some hours, when she was quieter and had her thoughts under control again, she saw clearly enough what the letter meant. Trenchard had broken down in his contract with himself. He had returned to opium, and doubtless, with the gusto of abstinence, he had drunk heavily. The letter before her was the outcome of despair; the first utterance of awakened and remorseful conscience.

No doubt this was the light in which it should be read; Dora was clear as to that. But much more difficult was the question which followed on this conclusion, how was the letter to be answered. Should she answer it at all? Was it of any avail to do battle with an adversary of such terrible power?

Trenchard had had two weapons to aid him—the strong desire of his better nature to kill the foe within him, and his love for Dora. She knew this. Well, both these weapons had failed him.

She shivered a little in her chair, drawing her wrap closer, and rocked herself to and fro, restless and sick with perplexity.

Must Trenchard be left to kill himself? She got up and walked about the room.

She seemed to see Trenchard alone, abandoned, yet fighting inch by inch against that malignant and enduring enemy. She knew that, his conscience once awakened, he would go on with the struggle to the last—would renew it again and again, vanquished no matter how often. She would have felt but little pity for him had she known him a man who, once defeated, would once and for all relinquish the endeavour. But she knew him quite different from this.

Final defeat might be the end of all his efforts, but he

would die a combatant.

She continued to pace the room, utterly without a

guide to show her in what way to aid him.

Then came the ring at the bell below. There was no reason that she knew of why Trenchard should send to Carriconna that night, yet she felt certain this must be

he, or his messenger.

She opened her door quietly, and heard the sergeant's voice in the hall. Her heart beat high, though she scarcely knew why; Dora herself could not possibly be the object of the sergeant's visit. Then she heard Anthony talking with him, and knew the reason of his coming. Still she lingered with her door half open. Had the sergeant any second mission?

She would have given anything to be downstairs. If she could see the sergeant just for a moment. He might have another letter for her, or some message that even a look might convey. But it was an hour since she had retired; she could not go downstairs again without

betraying herself.

She heard the sergeant cross the hall with Anthony, and heard Anthony shut the door behind him. Her heart sank; yet it was not so bad; Trenchard was going about his duty the next day. She listened to the sergeant's step passing down the drive.

All this while she had been so absorbed in Trenchard and her concern for him, as to have grown oblivious of herself, and the possible issues for her which his letter

had opened up.

Within the immediate past, the past of not more than

a few days, she had almost ceased from the speculations of the adventuress who had come to Carriconna to scheme for her father's fortune. All at once these pressed themselves upon her again. Losing Trenchard, she must lose that which would have enabled her to abandon the role of the adventuress. The thought was unworthy, and she felt it; yet it was natural to Dora. To marry Trenchard would have been social salvation for Dora. She had thought of that at first; she had lost sight of it when she felt that she cared for him; it returned to her now that she was likely to lose him.

She heard the household go to bed, whilst sleep the care charmer still delayed to come to her. She undressed and went to bed, her candle beside her. She had decided nothing. Three or four times during the night she awoke, re-lighted her candle, lay thus half-an-hour at a time and tried to sleep again. The last time she awoke day was breaking. She got up and drew aside her blind; the first faint whiteness of the morning was just appearing over the tops of the hills; the lake as yet was in shadow, all cold and dark. Dora's eyes wandered idly over the scene; the little twittering of birds was just beginning in the trees. As Dora was about to let the blind fall, she was startled to see the door of the tower open and a figure emerge from it. The light was so dim down by the tower that the figure was scarcely distinguish-Dora's first thought was that the telescope had been the object of some further mischief, and she was about to rouse her uncle, when, as the figure drew nearer, she saw, to her astonishment, that it was her uncle himself. She had the less difficulty in recognizing him at this distance inasmuch as he carried in his hand the mysterious leather portmanteau which had become to be associated in Dora's mind with Anthony's secret visits to the tower.

Fearful lest he should surprise her as a spy upon him, she let fall her blind, and went back to bed. But this episode effectually diverted her thoughts from the channel in which they had been uneasily flowing all the night, and with the mental effort to solve the riddle of

Anthony's conduct she fell into a sound and dreamless sleep for the first time that night.

When she awoke her mind had regained its vigour. Her recuperative power was always remarkable; a few hours' sleep were generally a sovereign remedy for her cares of mind. She rose refreshed, and the trouble of the previous night seemed to have dwindled into insignificance. What had looked so puzzling then, lay clear before her in the morning light.

She sprang up and took out her watch. Ten o'clock! She put the watch to her ear and listened; it was going quite rightly. She rang her bell, and Kate came to her.

"What have you been thinking of, Kate, to let me

sleep so late?"

"Ah, sure, why wouldn't ye sleep, ma'am? Aren't ye looking twice yerself for it this morning? Miss Barbara wouldn't let me call ye; and I'm to bring yer breakfast up."

"Everybody else has breakfasted long ago, I suppose?"
"They did, ma'am. But what matter? The master has gone with Mr. Trenchard about them boys; and Miss Barbara's gone to my lady's an hour back. And, ma'am, I was to say that if you wish to be aisy in yer

bed, there's no call why ye should get up."

"I couldn't do that for anything in the world, Kate; and I won't breakfast in bed either, thank you. I shall be down in no time."

Dora, as may be imagined, was not at all displeased to have the house to herself. She breakfasted alone, luxuriating in the unwonted solitude and silence of her surroundings. She was thinking out the letter she was to write to Trenchard, for she had decided that she must write to him. To leave his letter unanswered would be to accept it, and to sever them both completely; to leave Trenchard to his fate, to tell him that she scorned him for his weakness—no, she could not do that. But it was a very difficult and delicate task to write to him; she could not please herself with any form of words that took shape in her thoughts. She even neglected her

breakfast whilst trying to compose a suitable reply, which is sufficient proof that the matter absorbed her greatly.

"The briefer the better," she said to herself, and so

saying she at length sat down and wrote as follows:

"You are too despairing, and you despair too soon. One must lose some battles. You are wrong in thinking that you should isolate yourself."

She signed it with her initials. Then how to get the letter off?

Impossible to leave it on the hall table to await the postman's call. But with the day to herself what was to prevent her from walking into the village and posting it there? This she did when she had dispatched her breakfast.

Her whole nature sighed out its relief when she had done it. She thought of the letter on its way to Trenchard. She thought of Trenchard sitting in the court all day long and expecting it. Then she wondered what would follow. But in a little while she put the whole matter resolutely behind her. She had taken her step, and was satisfied with it.

And now how to dispose of the day? That question she did not need to ask herself. At once when she had disposed of the affair which concerned her nearest, she thought of the curious occurrence she had witnessed from behind her blind at daybreak. Now, if ever, the opportunity had come for solving, or attempting to solve, the mystery of the tower, if mystery there was.

Home again, she ran upstairs for her key, and with that in hand presented herself before the tower door,

# CHAPTER XXXII.

#### IN COURT.

THE court-house to which Anthony accompanied Trenchard for the purpose of giving evidence against the

enemies of science, was a miserable, narrow, low-ceilinged chamber, over the market-house, in the middle of the town of Knockdrum. The magisterial bench had probably been constructed with a view to the infliction of exemplary sentences upon prisoners, for it was so confined that no magistrate could stretch his legs in it; and, at the end of a few hours, the longer the magistrate's legs, the worse it was for the prisoner. There was no dock, but a low wooden platform under the bench accommodated prisoners and witnesses alike. Beyond this platform a stout bar, or pole, ran the width of the court, and kept the populace at a trifle more than arm's length from the administrator of justice.

When Trenchard and Anthony drove up, at the time of the opening of the court, the court-house was quite full, and outside in the market-place there were groups of people gathered. It was market day as well as sessions day; the square cumbered with live and other

objects for sale.

Everybody knew what the chief trial of the day was to be, and it goes without saying that everybody was in sympathy with the persons who were to be tried. Anthony and Trenchard were before the magistrate, who, however, was not long in following them. There was no demonstration, hostile or otherwise, on the part of the townspeople, or of those whom the market day or the sessions had brought to the town; and the solitary policeman stationed at either end of the square walked quietly to and fro amongst the groups.

The magistrate was a very big, fat, handsome man, and as popular with the people as a person in his position could expect to be. Unfortunately for the persons who had to appear before him in court, the magistrate always went on horseback to the scene of his duties; he rode to keep his weight down, and being a very bad horseman, the result was generally to put his temper up. Some stupid little rent cases came first on the list, and by the time these had been disposed of, the magistrate had satisfied himself for the two hundred and twentieth time that no possible effort could enable him to adjust himself

comfortably on the bench. The day was hot, besides, and there was no means of ventilating Mr. Ettrick's quarter of the court except by opening a sky-light immediately over his head, which created a draught, instead of a proper circulation of the air.

Anthony and Trenchard occupied seats beside the magistrate on the bench. They were a very friendly trio, and perhaps this circumstance did not tend to inspire the prisoners with any strong hopes of justice.

Trenchard's spruce dark uniform sat ill upon him that day; he looked so pale and worn; a contrast to the stout, handsome magistrate, with his amplitude of white waistcoat and shirtfront, and to Anthony, who sat stiffly in his tight, old-fashioned black coat, and menaced the whole court with his glare.

The magistrate, like other people, had heard of the famous telescope, and despite his irritability on account of the heat and the incommodious bench, the case

tickled his humour.

The three men concerned in the attack were put upon

the platform and charged.

Amongst the bulk of the spectators the chief interest in the case was one of curiosity. Everybody knew of Anthony's latest craze, and of the disagreeables which the telescope had been the means of creating on his estate. The case as against the three men charged was so clear that there could be no difficulty in bringing it home to them. Trenchard and his junior colleague, Graham, were the chief witnesses for the prosecution.

The magistrate was only puzzled to know what cause the men could have had for making a raid on the telescope; and to enlighten him on this point, Anthony was put upon the platform and testified to the fact that two of the prisoners were persons whom the instrument had assisted him to discover in the act of stealing turf from his bog; the inference being that the attack was prompted by motives of revenge, though it may very likely have had the additional object of putting a stop to any further detection of illegitimate enterprise on the bog. It was observed that Trenchard gave his evidence against the men with more emphasis and warmth than usual. He had quietly followed up the clue placed in his hands, when Dora gave him the scrawl that had been thrown into her lap in the little cemetery, and had little doubt in his own mind that one of the three men on the

platform was the culprit on that occasion.

It was Casey, one of the turf stealers, on whom the inspector's suspicions fastened; a man something over middle age, with sandy hair and freckled face, and a forehead that retreated as if in permanent fright at the rest of the countenance, which was certainly unpleasant to look upon. The three men maintained an air of sullen indifference to the proceedings. There was no liveliness in any of them, and not a flicker of humour redeemed their position on the platform. Casey's son, who was wedged against the bar in the front row of spectators, showed a keener and more malicious interest in the trial than his parent. He was a well-grown young fellow of nineteen, with a dark and rather handsome face, and a good head, the shape of which was spoiled by a pair of enormous ears that lay close to his skull as if gummed there, and combined with his close-cropped hair gave him a noticeably singular appearance, which had long since earned him the nickname of "Bullet." Bullet Casey missed no word that passed between Trenchard and Mr. Ettrick; his restless eyes noted every movement, now and again wandering down the court to cast a warning glance at his mother, who stood near the doorway. The trial was quickly over, and the men were led away under sentence of three months' imprisonment.

"I thought they'd have got more nor that," said the

woman Casey to her son.

"'Tis more nor enough," answered the young man.

"Oh, 'tis that indade," said the mother.

"And 'twas Trenchard done it," added young

"'Twas," said the woman. "Did ye mark how he bore down upon the boys in his ividence?"

"Troth, I did! But we'll get a chance at him for this."

"Twould be worth while, I think," said the mother.

The pair were soon lost in the sympathetic crowd in the market-place, which waited to see the prisoners driven off on a car to the gaol.

"That must be a great telescope of yours, Anthony," said the magistrate; "I'd like to see it. Come home to lunch with me, and I'll drive you over to Carriconna in

the afternoon."

Trenchard was asked to go with them, but excused himself.

"Trenchard's not himself at all, to-day," said the magistrate, as the inspector drove off in his dog-cart.

He was not, as the reader knows. And just now he

was more than ever impatient to be home again.

He thought that, in attempting to put Dora out of his reach, he might also banish her image from his thoughts, but that was not to be; and he had an intense desire to know whether she would answer his letter, whether she had already done so, and what the answer would be. He reflected that she could scarcely have replied as yet, but it did not lessen his unreasoning eagerness to learn whether she had done so.

He drove home fast.

# CHAPTER XXXIIL

#### THE DISCOVERY.

When Dora had let herself into the tower, intent on the discovery of its mystery, she took the precaution to shut the entrance door behind her. She hesitated whether to bolt it also, and then bolted it; less because she feared the possibility of interruption than because she chose in this way to enhance the excitement of the adventure. She made at once for the corner behind the staircase where she had previously observed the marks of recent disturbance amongst the loose bricks and rubbish ordi-

narily piled there.

Before displacing this dusty heap Dora carefully drew on an old pair of gloves, and looking ruefully at her neat grey dress, wished she had thought of borrowing one of Kate's capacious aprons. But she tucked the dress up, and plumping down on her knees, set to work energetically to clear the stone floor of its encumbrances. As she proceeded in her work there came slowly into evidence precisely what the explorer had expected to find—the outline of a trap-door, leading evidently to

some underground apartment.

Her excitement increased in proportion as she advanced with her task. She had long since persuaded herself that her curiosity was legitimate. She got the rubbish all cleared away, and an obvious trap door was there beneath her. She looked at it with mingled feelings of pleasure and anxiety; suppose the trap-door should be too heavy for her to lift. She put her hand in the ring, got the door up a little way and let it fall. It was easily moved, but heavy. Then she had recourse to stratagem. There was a broken iron bar which had been used as a bolt to the door lying ready to her hand, and using this, first as a lever and then as a prop, she succeeded in raising the door half-way; and thus much achieved, she was able to see, in the twilight beneath, a short flight of stone steps, descending almost perpendicularly to some place not yet visible.

The door being raised half-way, Dora could, without

much difficulty, throw it back completely.

She was in the act of doing this when her exertions and her thoughts were rudely interrupted by the clarging of the luncheon-bell. She had taken no heed of time, and had not noticed that it was very near the luncheon-hour when she began her operations. Should she neglect the bell until she had explored the region that lay at the bottom of the stone steps?

She was much tempted to do so, but she reflected

that if she delayed long Kate would almost certainly come to the tower in search of her. So for once in her life, Dora prepared reluctantly to go to luncheon. She left the trap-door still upright, calculating that some few hours would probably elapse before Anthony returned from Knockdrum; and, with Anthony out of the way, there was only the remotest chance that her work would be disturbed or discovered by anybody else.

Despatching her luncheon with very unusual haste,

she returned to continue her investigations.

Half-way down the steps that led from the trap-door she paused in a delicious fright. Suppose she should be detected. Suppose her uncle should return and hammer at the door. It was only because she knew that this was utterly unlikely to occur that she enjoyed the sensation. At the foot of the steps she paused again, till her eyes grew accustomed to the semi-darkness of the solid walled passage in which she found herself. This passage, which was only a few yards in length, opened at its extremity into a stone chamber, lighted solely and very dimly by means of a wide grating in one of the walls, a grating entirely hidden from external view by an overgrowth of weeds and ivy.

This was the only chamber to be seen, and to all appearance it was as bare as the passage which led to it.

Dora stood in the entrance and looked around, without discovering anything to recompense her labours.

She crossed the stone floor, which was in good preservation and dry, and scrutinized the walls on either side; then she saw at the end of the room, opposite to the doorway, what looked like a deep recess in the wall,

and to that spot she advanced.

Pushed back into the recess, in exploring the depths of which Dora found her hands almost more serviceable than her eyes, was a large old-fashioned dovecote, the numerous apertures of which were stuffed with packages of various sizes. One of these Dora pulled out and carried across the chamber to the grating in the wall. The little light that filtered through the thick screen of leaves showed Dora that what she held in her hand was

a canvas bag filled to bursting with some hard and heavy substance.

Dora passed her fingers over the surface, tingling with excitement and curiosity.

"It is full of gold!" she exclaimed.

The bag was secured only by means of a tape, the knot of which was easily unloosed.

Dora slipped it off, and putting her hand into the bag

drew out a dozen sovereigns.

"So!" she exclaimed again. "This is Uncle An-

thony's secret. He has turned miser."

She laid the bag on the stone ledge under the grating, and went back to the dovecote. The larger holes on the lower rows contained larger bags, and in some of the holes bag was stacked behind bag, half-a-dozen deep.

"Such a shocking old Croesus!" said Dora.

"Now I wonder how much there is in these precious bags? Poor Arthur and Kitty! Not much chance of Gravelmount for them if this is Uncle Anthony's craze. I wonder if the bags are marked?"

She went back again to the one she had placed on the ledge and examined it more closely. There were no marks or figures to indicate the amount of its contents.

"But it must hold a good deal," thought Dora; "you

can pack a hundred sovereigns into no space."

Curiosity urged her to empty the bag and count the gold; but prudence restrained her. Then all at once she began to be frightened, not knowing how long she had been in the chamber; and she hurriedly put back the sovereigns she had taken.

She tied the bag again, and returned it to its place in the dovecote. In doing so, her eyes, now well accustomed to the gloom, fell upon a good-sized tin box, tightly bound with cords, which stood upright in the

recess alongside the dovecote.

She stooped to examine this, lifted it, and found it not too weighty.

It was an ordinary biscuit-box labelled "Cracknels," and had no fastening but the knotted cords.

She undid these. The stable clock struck three, and

its sound frightened Dora more than ever. She could not be safe there much longer; but she had got the box open and she just peeped in.

"Notes, I declare!" whispered Dora in utter amaze-

ment.

She hurriedly replaced the lid, and tied the box as she had found it. She took another survey of the room, but its treasures were evidently confined to this recess.

"No wonder Uncle Anthony was jealous of his portmanteau!" said Dora, and then she trembled at the thought, how much of this hidden wealth lay here at her mercy.

The fortune she had schemed to get was piled before her—a great part of it at least, and useless there to any-

body.

Dora scarcely dared to give passage to the thoughts the wild wicked impulses that rushed upon her. She turned her back on the recess, trembling violently. Happily for her, she dared not stay.

Escaping from the treasure chamber, she ran along the passage, climbed the stone staircase, and shut the trap-door down upon that wealth and its temptations.

Disposing the stones and rubbish once more as she had found them she drew back the bolts from the towerdoor, and felt a great sense of relief as she did so.

And she was only just in time, for as she set the door a little way ajar she heard the voice of her uncle—in conversation with some one—coming down towards the tower. She made haste to run up to the observatory, and got the telescope into place; but no activity could shake off the thought that she had very nearly allowed her curiosity to betray her.

When Trenchard returned home, he, of course, found no communication from Dora. None such could have reached Moyrath, as he knew, unless Dora had chosen to send him a letter by hand. But hankering, as he did, for some word from her, were it only the curtest acceptance of the rejection implied in his letter to her, he was impatient of every hour of suspense.

Since his struggle of the previous day he had taken one small dose of opium; that was in the morning, just before he set out with Anthony for the court; by no means a sufficient quantity to sustain him in comfort

throughout the day.

The victim of opium is dependent upon his daily quantum to a far greater extent than the dram drinker upon his dram. When completely enslaved, he breaks down utterly if his dose be taken from him. Trenchard was not yet reduced to this condition of absolute subjection, but he was sufficiently under the influence of the drug to feel in intensity the horrid craving which the want of it produces; and the excesses he had committed within the last few hours, so far from deadening his appetite, had but increased and intensified it.

He had, however, regained a more equable and philosophic state of mind, in which he perceived that the desperate resolutions he had tried to force upon himself the day before were no longer to be entertained. He could not so weakly abandon himself to what the remorse of his first awakening had chosen to depict as

an inevitable fate.

Dora had judged him rightly in this. She knew that, whatever its final issue, he must go on with the contest he had begun. But along with this, he was still persuaded that the course he had taken with regard to Dora was the right one; so far, at any rate, as Dora was concerned. How he upbraided himself for the wretchedness of his state! Hitherto the struggle had lain between himself and his own conscience. Since his meeting with Dora his vice had been foe to him in another fashion; it had reared itself between him and the woman he loved. But is it not so with all vices? Their injuries are not to the wrong-doer alone.

Trenchard passed the afternoon in solitude, for the most part pacing his garden. He envied the freedom of nature all around him; his own imprisonment within the bonds of a demon himself had fostered, seemed more odious and unbearable than ever amid the placid

beauty of his garden.

He longed to know what Dora was doing. Dora, who seemed so strong and unrestrained in her life; what sympathy could she have with one like him? Would she answer his letter at all?

Too restless to remain quite idle, too restless to feel pleasure in the saddle, or in anything that took him far from home, he turned out at the gate of the drive and sauntered down the road.

A notion struck him.

There was no second delivery of the post in that outlying district, but persons who chose to do so might send, or apply, for letters at the office. Trenchard had occasionally made such calls when he was expecting official or other letters of interest.

Dora had not written overnight, or he would have received her missive in the morning. Might she, perchance, have done so that day? His impatience to hear from her made it seem probable, if not certain, that she must have written to him that day. It was a hope,

at any rate.

He struck into the high road and walked towards the village at a brisker pace. It was about six o'clock. Dora's letter had just been delivered from the office in the neighbouring village. It was handed over the counter to Trenchard before he made his inquiry.

"Was that all?" he asked carelessly.

"Yes, that was the only one."

So she had written to him after all!

He put the letter in his pocket and went out. He had thought to keep it until he was home again, but the desire to know what she had written was too strong in him. He took it from his pocket and opened it in the street. The few words it contained were gathered in an instant.

"You are too despairing, and you despair too soon. One *must* lose some battles. You are wrong in thinking that you should isolate yourself."

A tingled sense of delight came over him.

She did not despise him; she did not even accept his decision. He crushed the letter into his pocket and

walked on, feeling new life in him. His whole being was elevated, eased, gladdened. It seemed that some one had touched him with a healing and vivifying wand. His dejection left him; he drank in new courage; all seemed easier a hundredfold than it had done five minutes before.

The mental effect which the letter produced on him was almost as though he had drunk a full draught of opium; the same elation, flush and expansion of the imaginative faculties. He felt this himself, and wondered at it. The narcomaniac, when he first strives to return to his normal self, dreams always of some impossible substitute for the delightful poison. He knows, as no one else knows, that there is a stage of opium (or let the stimulant be what it may) which yields a pleasure that nothing else can purchase. If this could be produced by some agent that left no misery behind it! To find this non-destructive agent, this charmer that has no sting, becomes a passion; it is the dream of those who would have without pain that form of happiness which is pain's parent.

"If she would love me," thought Trenchard; "there

is nothing else necessary."

Then a chill shadow fell on him, as he reflected instantly, that this same love which he had fancied his before, had but just now failed to save him. But he could not keep down the strong sense of joy that overtopped all other feelings.

Dora did not reject him; that was what tingled in his

heart.

In this exalted state of fancy he walked on without taking note of his direction. He had passed the by-road that led to Moyrath. Looking up he saw Dora step out of a coppice, and face him full, her hands laden with white convolvulus.

The great delight of meeting her thus, at the instant when the thought of her was kindling him, overcame what feeling of awkwardness or shame might otherwise have made the encounter difficult on his part. The soft look of pleasure on his face called up just such another look on Dora's; and so they met without restraint on the one side or the other.

Dora did not know that he had had her letter; did not imagine that he could have it until the following morning. She had no clue to the feelings that expressed themselves so unmistakably on Trenchard's handsome countenance, but she said gaily:

"Why, you don't look ghostly at all!"

"How should I?" he answered. "I have just read your letter."

"Why, I only posted it at twelve to-day," said Dora.

"I—I took it to the post myself."

"That was good of you," said Trenchard; "and I—I went to the post to find it."

"You expected that I would write to you?"

"I do not know whether I did or not; but I thank

you deeply."

The relations between them, though of such recent birth, allowed conventionalities to be foregone. Doubtless both were aware of this; it was felt between them.

They walked on together.

"Was I not right in what I wrote?" said Dora.

"Yes and no," answered Trenchard. "You were right to tell me that I despaired too soon."

"Certainly I was," Dora said. "But in what was I

wrong?"

"Ought not one to fight a battle of this kind alone?" he asked after a pause on his part.

"Is one able to fight it alone?" asked Dora.

"Perhaps not; but—what help does one deserve?"

"Ah! How can you ask that? Who would withhold

help that could give it?"

They footed it some paces in silence. Trenchard was contending with himself. He scarcely knew what to make of Dora's words. She seemed almost to offer herself to him, this woman, whom he would have given the best part of his life to call his own. A more selfish man than Trenchard would doubtless have been less conflicted than he was; but he knew that to take Dora at her word was to compel her to a kind of sacrifice.

Perhaps she herself did not quite realize the significance that her words might have for him. Affection and sympathy went hand-in-hand with her. Trenchard scarcely dared to speak, for his next utterance must be decisive; and if, in the future, he should fail to be victor of himself, what would be the life of the woman he loved? This was not weakness, so much as an excessive distrust of self, born of his latest failure.

The sound of wheels behind them was, perhaps, a fortunate interruption. They turned about, and in the gathering dusk—for it was now some little time after sunset—were able presently to distinguish the Carriconna car, on which Joe was driving Miss Nugent home from Dovne.

The car stayed beside them.

"I was walking to meet you," said Dora to Miss Nugent; "but you were so late that I turned back again."

"Yes, we've been terribly busy, and I only hope Arthur isn't overdoing himself. Mr. Trenchard, you'll come in and take your dinner with us. 'Twill be ready in a few minutes."

"No, not to-night, thank you, Miss Nugent. I have a report to prepare which I ought to have finished this afternoon."

"Well, then, step up, Mrs. Lytton, my dear; for we must hurry, or Anthony'll be scolding us."

Dora turned and gave her hand to Trenchard, who

took it silently; a smile was their only good-bye.

The car drove on, and Trenchard, lifting his hat, turned about and walked briskly homewards. He felt in a much less degree than he had done earlier in the day the need of his accustomed stimulant.

"There is sustenance in love," he said. "I am sure

of it."

Thus his thoughts were borne back again upon Dora; and thus there began in him again the same mental contest—to ask Dora to share his lot, or not.

There is a fatal irresolution in opium. Its victim is tossed between doubt and desire, when there is any

decision to be taken.

It was so at this crisis with Trenchard. He felt, and rebelled against, the weakness that made him hesitate to seize the chance of hope and happiness held out to him. Rebelling, he gained fresh strength.

"To be able for once to cast doubt and fear aside!" he exclaimed with a touch of passion in his voice. "If

I could love her less, I should fear less."

He turned in at his own gate and approached the house with leisurely steps. The lamp was lighted in the dining-room, and the sergeant was preparing the table for dinner. Presently he came out to the door, and peered into the dusky garden for a sign of his master.

Trenchard, moving to and fro upon the lawn, saw

him and called out:

"I am here, William; is dinner ready?"

"Twill be ready to come on in five minutes, sir,"

answered the sergeant.

Trenchard entered the house and went up to his room; and before he came down again he had taken his decision. He had decided to ask Dora to be his wife.

"No more uncertainty," he said. "I will try and see her to-morrow."

He pictured her sitting opposite to him at his table—his strength, his comfort, his joy.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

# ARTHUR QUITS HIS POST UNDER NECESSITY.

ANTHONY'S sensations at the dinner table that evening would have been worth an effort to depict, had he known in what manner Dora had spent a portion of the afternoon. So at least Dora surmised, and doubtless correctly. She took little glances at him from time to time; laughing in herself at the expression of complacent cunning which settled on his face as often as he

thought of the clever way he had gone to work to secure his brother's riches to himself.

She had not yet got over the excitement of her discovery, though her meeting with Trenchard had for the

moment put it from her mind.

Now she began to be exceedingly puzzled as to Anthony's reasons for heaping his money up in so useless a fashion. Whatever else his shortcomings, she had given him credit for sufficent shrewdness in his money matters. What was his purpose in piling his fortune into a vault where it lay more barren than seed upon a rock? All unwittingly she came very near to her uncle's secret.

"If," thought she, "he knew that I were his niece, that I expected some share of my father's money, there would be an object then in his hiding it away like this."

It was odd, their sitting opposite to each other, those two; he knowing her secret, she knowing his; each triumphing quietly over the other; and Barbara there, so simple and innocent of it all!

"You're greatly absorbed, you two," Barbara remarked at last. "Mrs. Lytton, you didn't tell me how you

spent the day at all."

No, and Dora was not likely to tell it either.

"I wrote a letter in the morning," she said, "and gave Mr. Ettrick a famous lesson in astronomy in the afternoon."

"Well, and what became of your prisoners, Anthony?"

pursued Barbara.

"Faith, they got off cheaply enough," returned her brother; "three months each and no more. And to think they might have had me telescope broken, and I getting on so nicely with my studies."

Here his old eyes twinkled at Dora; for this last was a shameless utterance, and Anthony knew it; he having

all but abandoned his astronomical pursuits.

"I hear," he added, "the Caseys are mad with Trenchard; though I declare I think he might have got them a heavier sentence."

"I am glad they did not get any more," said Barbara; "it's almost the first time we've had trouble with

any of our own people; this will only stir up ill-feeling, and if we don't take care we'll be having the same trouble that there is at Doyne."

"How are they getting along there?" inquired An-

thony.

"Not so badly at all," said Miss Nugent; "though 'tis well we were able to help them out with their stores."

"Is the village still refusing to serve them, then?"

"They sent to buy candles there this morning," said his sister, "and the man asked them a guinea a pound."

"That's a new style of boycotting, I declare," exclaimed Anthony with a laugh; "but is it going to last, do you think?"

"I'm hoping not," said Barbara; "the most of the people are wanting to be friendly, and they'll bring the

rest round by-and-by, I trust."

"That's well," said Anthony, but in truth this subject did not keenly interest him. He was projecting another visit to Dublin, and thinking over the mild surprise his banker had expressed at the vast and rapid inroads he had been making on the store in that functionary's keeping.

Anthony had mystified his banker, as he had mystified

other people, and it amused him.

"But there's one thing I'm afraid of," said Barbara, "and that is that Arthur is in a way to overwork himself. Ye know, Anthony, that fever's not so far behind him; and a sickness of that sort must leave its effects of course."

Anthony was always impatient at references to the

health of his son.

"I think, now, he's the strongest man in the county," said he.

"Maybe he is," said Barbara; "but there's no call on

him to overwork himself on that account."

"Ye're well able to take care of him, my dear," replied Anthony, giving the signal to rise from the table. "Mrs. Lytton," he said, when they were in the drawing-room, "I think we might have just a weeny bit of a lesson."

Dora fetched out the lesson book, which in truth was

not too much thumbed; and Anthony, rumpling his hair and stiffening his back, prepared to give his whole attention to it.

"The motion of the moon among the stars," began Dora—and so the lesson went on, to the accompanying click of Barbara's knitting needles, until the tea was brought; with the tea came an unexpected visitor, Arthur himself.

"Goodness me, my boy! what's the matter?" cried

his aunt springing up from her chair.

Arthur's appearance, in fact, warranted that startled interrogatory. He was perfectly pale, and seemed not quite master of his limbs.

He took the nearest chair and endeavoured to look as

though nothing were the matter with him.

"Has the boy been drinking?" queried Anthony, sotto voce; an extraordinary supposition on Anthony's part, for the son followed the father in the extreme sobriety of his habits.

"I'm not feeling very first-rate, that's all, Aunt Barbara," said Arthur with a rather faint smile. "I thought I would come home and be doctored by you for a night."

"My dear boy," said his aunt nervously. Then turn-

ing to Anthony, "Didn't I tell ye now?"

"What's wrong with ye, my boy?" said his father, peering at Arthur over his glasses with, perhaps, more anxiety than he cared to show.

"Oh, I'm ashamed of myself," returned Arthur with another effort at bravado. "I feel quite done up; but Aunt Barbara will put me straight again in a night."

"Go to bed this minute," said his aunt with tender

insistency, "and I'll go up to you."

Arthur rose from his chair, reeled, and would have fallen, had not his aunt darted forward and caught him by the arm; his weight upon her nearly bore the poor lady to the ground, and would have done so, had not Dora, whose movements were twice as quick as Anthony's, sprung to her aid.

Between them they supported Arthur till Anthony

took his son's weight upon himself.

Arthur, however, regained his equilibrium, though his effort was obvious.

"Take a good hoult o' me," said Anthony, whose brogue came out strong in his excitement; and leaning on his father Arthur gained his bedroom. Barbara followed them, and Dora was left alone.

Dora and Arthur were never the best of friends; and their relations, at kindest, contained no more than the show of friendship. Dora's was not in the least a jealous nature, and if at times she grew impatient of the affection lavished by Barbara upon her nephew, it was only that any effusive display of that kind irritated her, as being foreign to her own habit and character.

She could never repress the fancy that Arthur saw her not quite as the others did; and the sensitiveness that arose from the falsity of her position at Carriconna, made her think that he recognized the adventuress under the mask of the pseudo teacher of astronomy.

She was wrong in part, and in part she was right, in this notion that she never succeeded in suppressing.

Arthur, of course, had no more idea than Barbara who Dora was, or what was her real business amongst them; but he had never quite brought himself to believe in Dora's astronomical attainments. On the whole it was, perhaps, as well for both of them that Arthur was not an astronomer himself.

Dora's glance fell on the tea-tray. It seemed a pity that the tea should be wasted. She poured out a cup for herself and sipped it slowly, with the quiet satisfaction with which she relished all good things, potable or comestible. She was sorry for Arthur, for she had perceived in a moment that he was genuinely ill; and with her own keen zest of life, she felt a little diminution of pleasure before the spectacle of suffering.

It was necessary to the perfection of her own enjoyment of existence, that the people around her should enjoy it also. It may have been that, consciously, or unconsciously, this feeling was never quite absent when she thought of Trenchard and a possible future with him. She could not help being conscious that her old

philosophy of life must undergo some modification if she were to exist contented in consort with one whose days must be a struggle, more or less intermittent, both of

body and of mind. But this by the way.

"Arthur is going to have another fever, I am afraid," was her reflection as she sipped her tea. "Voild une iolie affaire pour nous! Voild toute la maison dérangée. C'est ennuyant. Poor Aunt Barbara and poor Kitty; I am very sorry for them both."

Anthony came downstairs and presented himself

again in the drawing-room.

"Did ye ever see the like of that now?" said her uncle ruefully.

"I'm afraid Mr. Arthur is really unwell," said Dora

sympathetically.

"Tis a fever he's in, and no less," returned Anthony dolefully. Then, as if he had forgotten and suddenly remembered, "and I'm to go for the doctor this minyut."

"Is it so bad as that?" said Dora; "but why not send John for the doctor? Wouldn't Miss Nugent prefer that you stayed with us—with her, I mean? Can I not do anything to help Miss Nugent? You know that my husband was a doctor, and I am really quite an

experienced nurse."

"Ye're the best of women, so ye are, and I do think 'twould be better for John to fetch Maguire, and meself to remain in the house. He's a little light-headed this moment, so he is, and maybe he'll be worse before Maguire can be here. I'll go down and send John off this moment. Did ye take a cup of tea? You don't think of yourself at all."

Dora's empty cup was happily under the shelter of

the tea pot, where Anthony did not see it.

"I'll give you a cup, Mr. Nugent," said she, and

suited the action to the word.

"There's no one like ye," said Anthony, and rang the bell for John, instead of going to seek him in the servants' hall. "Well, well, I'm an unfortunate man; things have a way of going wrong with me. These fevers, now, are a matter of weeks, I suppose?" "Oh, that depends," said Dora cheerfully; "Mr. Arthur has such a good constitution, you know. Besides it may not be a fever after all; we must wait till Dr. Maguire comes. It may be only a feverish attack."

"I never had a fever myself," said Anthony, "and here's two of them for Arthur within a poor twelvemonth. John," the factotum presenting himself at that moment, having already heard of Arthur's attack, "ye'll put a saddle on the mare and go off for Dr. Maguire at once."

"I will so, sir."

"And take care ye don't come home without him."

"'Deed I'll not, sir."

"You may go now."

"Sure, I'm gone already, sir."

Anthony drank his tea and returned upstairs.

"Please tell Miss Nugent," whispered Dora up the stairs after him, "that I am only waiting to be called on."

# CHAPTER XXXV.

#### A TRIFLING ADVENTURE.

JOHN MAHER had to follow Dr. Maguire from the doctor's own house to that of a friend a mile and a half farther on, and when Carriconna was reached again, some two hours later, the patient was in a high fever. He was worse the next day, and Dr. Maguire had to tell Miss Nugent that her nephew was suffering from a rather sharp attack of brain fever.

"Now what has Arthur been doing?" asked the

doctor of Barbara.

"Well, you know how hard he has been working at Doyne, and bothered about their matters there, doctor; and, I suppose, he wasn't fully strong from the fever he had in Africa, though he never looked better in his life than he did when he came home." Barbara did not care to add, though the doctor was a family friend of

many years' standing, that a chief cause of Arthur's worries lay in his father's unaccountable attitude towards himself and Kitty, his unwillingness to make any settlement with Arthur, or even to suggest the prospect of one.

Word of his illness had of course been sent to Doyne; and of course also the message that was received there

was answered quickly enough by Kitty in person.

Barbara had described Arthur's case as mildly as possible, so that Lady Frayne did not think it necessary to accompany Kitty, who was dispatched on a car with a policeman on the other side of her as escort.

"I knew he was going to be ill, Barbara; but he would go on till he could scarcely stand, and I am sure I wish those wretched crops had all been lost before it came to

this. Can't I go up and see him?"

"My dear, I'd let you in a minute if I dared. But the doctor won't allow a creature near him except myself and his father."

"Oh, dear," sobbed Kitty, "and to think that it's all

our fault."

"Now, there's foolishness for you," said Barbara; "'tis nobody's fault at all, and 'tis just a mercy that the whole of us are not down with fever this minute, you and your mother and all."

"Where's Mrs. Lytton?" asked Kitty, not quite assured as to Barbara's assertion that Anthony and his

aunt were Arthur's sole guardians.

"Mrs. Lytton? She went off at nine this morning to Rathfarline to get ice."

"Why, Rathfarline is ten miles away," said Kitty.

"'Tis, every step of it," answered Barbara with a sigh; "and how we'll manage to get a regular supply, I don't know."

"Must he have ice every day?"

"Every day, and all day for the present. But, my dear, I must go upstairs again. And tell me now, how

will you manage at home?"

"Oh, never mind us, Barbara; we've had the worst of it now. Well, I shall get over somehow this afternoon or this evening, if I'm pelted on the road."

"Indeed, don't be running any risk. Won't we find means to let you know somehow? And for the next few days there's nothing to be done but wait the course of the fever."

Kitty went sorrowfully off, and Miss Nugent returned to the sick room, where, and during several succeeding weeks, all her interests and affections were centred. It was a struggle for life with Arthur, and the resources of the household, isolated in that sequestered region, were strained to the utmost to obtain the means necessary to aid him in the contest.

Dora bore her part with the rest, nursing, watching and waiting; and had scant leisure to be troubled about her own concerns. She had seen Trenchard once or twice since their last meeting on the road, for he, as in duty bound, had made calls of inquiry at Carriconna; and, when disengaged, it was Dora who had received him. But these visits had necessarily been of the briefest, and when he and Dora saw each other they both felt that their own affairs must wait until the acute crisis of anxiety about Arthur was over. Once, as she was bidding him good-bye at the hall door, Dora said gently:

"You have not told me how you are yourself?"

"Not worse at any rate," he replied almost cheerfully. "Hope is a powerful lieutenant."

Dora had not replied in words, but a glad look sprang into her face, which was somewhat pale and weary with the close duties of the last few days; and he had seen her gladness before the door closed upon him. It was a strange time for Dora: a mere inmate of the house, yet called upon in this emergency to act as a daughter of the house. She felt half tempted more than once during this time of anxiety and trouble to declare herself to Barbara. She felt instinctively that their near relationship at this moment would be a comfort to her aunt, who had learned to depend trustfully on Dora's constant alertness and bountiful physical strength. But the remembrance of Anthony's secret withheld her. That hoard of gold in the tower cellar weighed upon her like a nightmare. One night, when she was keeping

watch by the bedside of Arthur, who lay muttering to himself, his restless hands never ceasing to fidget over the sheets of his bed, the thought had occurred to her:

"If Arthur should not recover who will inherit all that hoard? Would Anthony die and make no sign?"

Then she went on to wonder what could be the meaning of his avaricious habit? out of what purpose could it have arisen? When she first came to Carriconna he had been all for spending. Had not his sister been anxious lest he should spend too quickly? What was it that had turned him about, and so suddenly? Had he any dread of losing the money? Could he possibly suspect her identity? The thought made her tremble, sitting alone in the dimness of the sick room. Could she in any way have betrayed herself? But no; she felt certain that she had not; it was absurd. She had touched the precipice more than once, she knew, but that was all. The mystery remained a mystery to Dora, and the anxious days and nights moved slowly away, and the crisis of Arthur's illness passed, and he began to creep back to convalescence.

Grey November days had succeeded to the brilliant harvest season before Arthur made his first descent to the dining-room, where Aunt Barbara and Kitty made a festival of afternoon tea in his honour; and the days were shortening with woful rapidity before he was strong enough to pass beyond the hall-door, leaning on Kitty's

little plump arm.

"I'll have to drive over to Rathfarline to-day," announced Anthony one morning at breakfast, "to take the rents. Is there anything ye're wanting, Barbara?"

"I think I'll want to go with you, Anthony," replied Barbara. "I've some shopping to do, and I must do it there or in Dublin. Will you come with us, Mrs. Lytton? You weren't out this good while."

"I should like it very much; but can one really shop

at Rathfarline?"
Barbara laughed.

"Well, if you don't want the modes," said she. "You

mustn't be thinking about the *modes*. They're not too great at the *modes* in Rathfarline."

"And what'll Arthur do with the two of you away?"

asked Anthony.

"Kitty's coming to drive him over to Doyne for luncheon to-day. The doctor says he may go, if he's home quite early."

"Then I'll leave John here to hurdle up the new

sheepfolds. Can ye be ready by ten?"

"Why couldn't we?" answered Barbara.

The rents which Anthony had to go to Rathfarline to collect were attached to a small property owned by him in that neighbourhood; a property that always cost him money and never brought him any. He collected the rents there twice a year, or rather he went there twice a year to make a show of collecting them, for in general he spent the greater part of the day in listening to the arguments of his tenants as to why they should not or could not pay any rents at all. It was a long lonely and dreary ride, a dark cold day, and nothing comforting in Anthony's conversation, for he talked of the days when the return journey from Rathfarline, with the rents stowed in the well of the car, was not unattended with dangers by the way. Indeed, through mere force of habit. Anthony still carried with him on his rent-day journeys to Rathfarline the old horse pistol, which had sometimes been a useful companion on similar journeys a generation earlier.

He favoured (and tried to frighten) Dora with a sight of that arm; but Dora, being, as we know, a pistol woman, was only shocked at its hopeless antiquity.

"It won't go off very easily," said Anthony kindly, mistaking Dora's expression of contempt for one of alarm.

"No," she replied, "I think I would rather stand before than behind it."

Anthony, crestfallen, returned the pistol to its leathern case.

"Have you many rents to collect, Mr. Nugent?" asked Dora.

"I've a good many that should be collected, but that's one matter; to collect them's another. Ah, no, rent day's not what it used to be. Rent day was rent day then. You went to take your money and you took it."

"And what do you do now?" said Dora.

"Faith, you do what you can; and if you keep a

sweet temper you're no bad man."

"'Tis the times that are so bad," put in Barbara.
"'Tis well to be a little above the need of rents these days."

"My own's my own for all that, and I like to take it,"

retorted Anthony.

The grey mare making her own pace, which was an indifferent one, gave them more time for talk than they found subjects to talk about, and nobody was sorry when Rathfarline was reached.

It was a loose-built straggling town, which seemed to have proposed to itself to take one shape at one stage of its career, and another at another, and to have finished with the resolve—successfully carried out—to have no

shape at all.

Anthony received his rents or the apologies for them in a miserable little room attached to the court-house, where he sat behind a small baize-covered table, on which in the course of an hour or two rested some dirty little heaps of silver and copper, and a smaller number of dirtier Irish notes, which, as though ashamed of both their size and colour, made the least of themselves that they could.

The tenants straggled in till the room was full and strong smelling. There were frieze coats and coloured shawls, bare feet and blackthorn sticks. There were

also excuses in plenty.

"The pigs an' my grandfather died the same day, yer honour, an' by the same token I couldn't scrape the bit

o' rint togither anyhow."

Sterne would have said that the scrape of the foot and the smile which accompanied this were atonement enough in themselves.

An old woman edged to the front, pushing a gawky son before her. "Tell his honour ye're comin' on well in yer schoolin', an' say the rint'll be ready at Christmas, an' ax his honour for a tree for firin'."

A red-haired man with a squint (the combination is one of nature's most exasperating freaks) said he had "skint (skinned) two cows within the month"—to have skint a cow is to have lost one by death—"an' there's the very rayson I'm not ready wid yer honour's rint, yer honour."

An accomplished comedian of sixty or thereabouts, with his knee-breeches artistically patched, said unblushingly, "that he had been living so much for the other world that he'd had no time to think of his rent."

A youth who came forward as his father's deputy offered hay and turkeys as a substitute for cash.

Another proposed to drive his pigs to Carriconna in

lieu of the rent.

Three men and a woman in succession paid their money down without a word, and Anthony was so astonished that he forgot to count it.

One had buried his father, another his aunt, a third had lost all his potatoes, and a fourth said his pigs were

not ready for killing.

The difficulty was to know who spoke the truth and who spoke it in paraphrase. Anthony's rule was to believe no one who did not come with his money in his hand, but he could not quite shake off the awkward responsibilities of his position as a nouveau riche, being quite aware that his tenants knew they were dealing with a landlord who had suddenly become able to let them all live rent-free on his soil. Per contra, it went much against the grain with Anthony to submit to be wheedled on account of his wealth.

The last apologist having presented himself, Anthony raked in the handful of rents he had been fortunate enough to secure, and harangued his assembled tenants in their own simple vernacular:

"Ye don't love me, or ye'd be paying me me rints.

Ye don't love one another, or ye'd be gettin' marrid, an' that'd be good for me too, for ye'd be wantin' new houldins. An' I declare the Almighty—praise for evermore to Him!—doesn't love yez either, or he'd be takin' ye to Himsel', an' me frind the priest'd be paid for buryin'

ye."

The November sun was hastening towards the horizon when Anthony and his sister and Dora started to drive homewards. The Rathfarline rents in a package in Anthony's tail-pocket made no appreciable difference to the horse's burden, and that beast, scenting his stable, made the running at a fair round trot. It was four o'clock, Barbara and Dora had pleaded for a cup of tea at the hotel before starting, but Anthony, who had had a thimbleful of whiskey in his rent-room, put aside this request, saying they'd be home in no time.

Dora, who had spent an hour with Anthony and his tenants, kept Barbara amused with her description of the scene, and teazed Anthony about the pistol and the package of rents, and the package of rents and the pistol, until he wished that both were in the ditch.

"Did ye hear anything in the town?" he asked

Barbara.

"Oh! there now, to be sure; I was forgetting it. They told me at Martin's that Tom Feeney has had another terrible row with his father, and declares he'll go off to America at once. The old man will scarcely let Tom sleep in the house, and has turned his horse out of the stable; and his mother and Mary are in a dreadful way about it. They say Tom has made up his mind to go off immediately."

The Feeneys were well-to-do tenants of Anthony's on a farm near Carriconna; and Tom Feeney, the son, was one of the smartest young men in the neighbourhood and a favourite with Anthony and his sister. The violent temper of the father was continually bringing on a domestic crisis, such as hid just occurred, and Tom had more than once threatened that the next quarrel forced on him by his father should be the last.

"Martin says," continued Barbara, "that Tom's mind is made up this time. Anthony, you must go up there, and bring the old man to reason. If Tom leaves it, the farm will go to pieces."

This last was an appeal to the practical side of

Anthony, which took due and immediate effect.

"I believe I'll go up this evening," said he.
"Twould be the best thing," assented Barbara.

"If ye wouldn't be afraid to drop me on the road," said Anthony doubtfully.

"What would we be afraid of?" interrupted Bar-

bara.

"I was going to say," said Anthony, "that if ye wouldn't be afraid of driving home the last mile by yourselves, we'll be passing within a near step of Feeney's, and I'll go up there at once."

"I'll take the reins," said Dora.

"There's the pistol, you know," said Anthony.

"Oh, don't leave that with us," said Dora. "I dread every stone we go over lest it should burst. You'd

better leave the rents with us."

"I will," said Anthony. "N—no," he added, withdrawing his hand from the pocket out of which he had been on the point of taking the package of rents, "they're as well where they are. They're no weight at all—the worse for me! But I'm not getting down just yet."

They were about two-thirds of the way home, and it was very nearly dark; but as Anthony still held the reins, and both he and his horse knew the road by heart, he did not at present trouble himself to light the carriage lamps. At the end of another mile and a half he sud-

denly pulled up.

"The stile's just here, I think," said he, though Dora could see nothing on the side of the road on which Anthony was looking except the dark unbroken line of the hedge. But when Anthony had dismounted and lighted the lamps, there was visible, just where the car had stopped, a low stone fence in the hedge.

"See how well I knew it," exclaimed Anthony.

"Now, will I give the reins to you, Mrs. Lytton; you're

not a bit frightened, either of you?"

"Sure, what could happen to us now?" said Barbara; "we're not likely to be run away with, and if Mrs. Lytton can keep out of the ditch——"

"I'll leave that to the horse," answered Dora, as that animal made another willing start for home, leaving Anthony shouting them a parting caution from the top

of the stile.

"We've just about a mile and a half, I think," said Barbara, "but we're as good as home already, for we're on our own ground at this minute."

"I'm getting uncommonly hungry," said Dora.

"You can't be worse than I am, if that's any comfort to you. Anthony's a terrible poor man for feeding when you're out with him."

All at once the horse swerved violently and came to a

dead stop at the side of the road.

Barbara and Dora, laying hold of each other by a

common instinct, saved themselves from a fall.

They were just driving past a narrow strip of plantation that bordered the road for about a hundred yards, and the thick shadow of the tall pine trees made the darkness almost black. The glare of the lamps prevented them for a moment from distinguishing who or what it was that had arrested the horse; the next instant the figure of a man was visible standing at its head.

Dora's physical courage was probably superior to Barbara's, but during the next few seconds she perhaps

felt the more frightened of the two.

Barbara, on her brother's property, and within a mile of home, was more indignant than alarmed at finding

herself stopped in this fashion.

"Who's that, and what do you want, and what do you mean by it? I'm Miss Nugent; how durst you stop me this way?" she cried in the pluckiest manner. "Stand out of that, or I'll drive you down."

Dora, recovering her own wits, said hurriedly:

"Perhaps there's an accident."

"'Tis no accident at all," said Barbara angrily; "'tis

mischief of some sort."

"'Tis all a mistake, Miss Nugent, my lady," a voice called from close beside the car, though the owner of the voice remained invisible. "Let go o' that horse, ye omadhaun; didn't I tell ye 'twasn't right?" The last words were spoken in a lower tone, and as the voice finished the man who had been holding the horse vanished without a word. The horse, still trembling, made a sort of bound forward when his head was released, and only Dora, who was on the side from which the voice had proceeded, heard the loud and angry whisper, "Sure, I knew 'twas too early for Trenchard."

At those words Dora's heart sprang within her. If she had been frightened before on Barbara's account and her own, what were her feelings now when she realized

the true purpose of the ambuscade?

Those men were waiting for Trenchard!

What their numbers might be she had no idea, nor what their intentions; but he was in danger. Was it possible that she should drive on in safety and leave him to meet some unknown fate alone and unwarned?

Impossible; she could not do it. At whatever cost

she must try and warn him.

She drew the reins, and the horse subsided unwillingly into an uneasy walk; he had had adventure enough, and desired nothing better than the safety of his stable.

Miss Nugent started nervously. She was still wondering, half-anxiously and half-indignantly, what that rude stoppage of their progress could have signified.

"What is it now?" she asked.

"Nothing, Miss Nugent, only I—I think—I am sure
—I must get down and—go back."

"Go back, my dear! The sooner we both get home the better, I think. Have you dropped anything?"

"Oh, no; but do you know those men are waiting for Mr. Trenchard? They must mean him some harm."

It was too dark to see Dora's face, but there was a

wibration of pain and terror in her voice which told Aunt Barbara much, and made her wonder, moreover, that she had so long been unsuspicious.

"My dear Dora," she said gently—it was the first

time she had called her so-" are you sure?"

"I distinctly heard the man who spoke to you whisper to the others that he knew it 'was too early for Trenchard.' Dear Miss Nugent, I must go back. If those men are waiting for him, as they certainly are, it can't be for any good. He might be shot."

"Dear, dear! But sure, if there's any shooting, wouldn't Trenchard be able to give as good an account

of himself as anybody?"

"But, don't you see, they will take him unawares," pleaded Dora, in a fever of nervous impatience. "We never saw nor suspected anybody till the horse was stopped."

"And d'ye mean that you really will go back alone?"

"Yes. I am determined."

"Well, wait now. Keep the horse moving slowly, for we're not far beyond them, and they'd hear us, maybe, if we stopped."

Fortunately there was a bit of a hill at this part of the road, which was a good excuse for the walking pace to

which Dora had reduced the horse.

"I'll be obliged to go on at a trot when you're down," said Miss Nugent, and there were tears in her voice as she spoke.

"You needn't be afraid for me, dear Miss Nugent," answered Dora. "I shall get round behind the men somehow, without being heard. I know that bit of wood

quite well."

"There's a footpath—I'll show it you in a minute—" said Barbara, "will lead you right through the planting, and far enough back that the men won't see you, nor hear you neither, only you must go like a cat. But it's a dreadful danger I'm letting you run into."

"I don't think of that a bit. I should never forgive myself if I did not go; and I must go at once, for every

minute may be precious."

"Tis a thing which some one ought to do; no

question about it," said Barbara.

In the midst of her terrible anxiety, Dora could not but recognize the clear-headed way in which Miss Nugent had grasped the situation, and the promptitude

with which she helped her to carry out her plan.

"Here, now, is the footpath," said Miss Nugent; "you'll find two big stones by there. Now jump off carefully and pass between them, and if ye can manage in the dark to keep to the footpath, 'twill lead ye back to the road at the far end of the plantation. I'll hurry on and send John, and as many boys as he can get, right along the road after ye. Now jump, and God be with ye!"

Miss Nugent took the reins, and the moment she was sensible that Dora's weight was off the car she drove quickly on. This she must do, as both of them knew, for they were but a little way in advance of the men in hiding, and to have stopped for any cause but the hill

would have been dangerous in the extreme.

Dora, left alone in the pitchy night—for they had not yet passed out of the added gloom of the pine trees—groped her way to the edge of the road, and found the two large upright stones which Miss Nugent had spoken of

Slipping between them, she discovered, by sense of touch rather than of sight, a narrow beaten track which it was easy to follow, even in the blackness of the plantation, for wherever she overstepped it her foot pressed a thick, soft carpet of odorous pine spikes, very different from the trodden path, which was much used in the daytime by field labourers and children going to and from school.

### CHAPTER XXXVI.

#### THE TWO SURPRISES.

ALL at once Dora heard a shot. She was, as far as she could judge, about half-way through the wood, and at its thickest part. The shot, which seemed too loud for a pistol, had evidently been fired from some spot considerably in advance of where she was. If it had been fired by the men who had stopped the car they must have moved from their hiding-place and gone farther up the road. Indeed, just before she heard the shot, it had entered Dora's mind that unless the men were unusually brave or reckless, her mission might, after all, prove a fruitless one; since, having been surprised at their work, it was likely enough that they would not wait to finish it. The gunshot dispelled that fancy rudely. Instead of abandoning their work, they had, apparently, hastened forward to complete it.

Dora stood still and listened fearfully. She thought—she could not but think—of her own situation. Her first natural instinct whispered her to go no further. Suppose that shot had been fired at Trenchard? If it had been she had already failed in her purpose of warning him. If she should fall amongst the men who had fired at him her own life would, doubtless, be in danger.

These reflections seized and held her an instant, but she as quickly freed herself from them. What! turn back and leave Trenchard wounded, helpless perhaps, upon the road, with scarcely a chance of succour through all the night. The thought had no sooner presented itself to her than, blind to all self-danger, she made greater haste than ever to reach the high road at the spot whence the sound of the shot had come. The straight, smooth path she was on offered no hindrance to her feet, and from a quick walk she began to run. She had scarcely made a dozen paces when her still-expectant ear caught the noise of hoofs upon the road.

The hoofs were at the gallop, but the gallop diminished to a trot, and that almost immediately became a walk.

"That is he," thought Dora.

She stopped, thinking how quickest to emerge from the wood on to the road. Quitting the path, she struck in amongst the trees, and feeling her way rapidly from stem to stem, got through the shallow depth of the wood and clambered the bank on to the road just as the horse came up. She could just distinguish the figure of the rider in a stooping attitude in the saddle. In the uncertainty of night the figure might be any one's, but Dora felt sure it could be only his.

"Stop!" she cried out. "It is I, Dora."

The sound of her voice, and of her name, made Trenchard reel in his saddle. He was in a half-swoon, and the excitement of hearing her call to him—the more so that he could not be certain whether his dulled and failing senses deceived him—aided still more to dazzle and to confound him.

"Yes," he answered, with a thickness in his voice, "yes, I am quite well. But what—what—" He swerved in his saddle, and only saved himself by clutching at his pommel. Then all at once he straightened and seemed to recover himself.

But for the shot that she had heard, one knows to what cause Dora would at once have attributed this extraordinary condition. And if, despite the shot, there had been a shadow of doubt on her mind, it vanished when, as she went forward and laid her hand upon the saddle, she felt it all wet with some warm clammy fluid.

Trenchard had been wounded!

"Dora—Mrs. Lytton—what is this? How are you here?"

And slowly and somewhat uncertainly he got down from his horse. Thus close, they could see each other's faces. Trenchard's was almost colourless, and he held his bridle arm stiffly on a level with his chest.

"I have come too late, after all," was Dora's only

answer.

"Too late? Do you mean that it is for me you

came?"

"Those men stopped us on the car just now—Miss Nugent and me. I heard them say, as we went through them, that it was you they were waiting for. I came back to warn you."

"That was to risk your life for mine," said Trenchard.

"Your arm is wounded," said Dora.

"The bone is broken, I think," replied Trenchard.

"There is not much that can be done."

"In that case, no," said Dora. "Oh, the pain must be terrible. But see, I can fix it so that it will jar less."

She untied, as she spoke, a long silken scarf from her throat, and slipping it dexterously beneath his arm, knotted it round his neck, so that it formed a firm soft sling for the injured wrist.

"Good," said Trenchard, "good; such dear, clever fingers. Did you say that you came to warn me? Say

it again."

"You must not make me repeat such things," said Dora, smiling a little through her concern, as she adjusted the knot on his shoulder.

"But say it again, for you know that I love you,

Dora."

"Well, then, I do say it again."

"And you let me say that I love you?"

"But are you quite sure that you do?"
"I am surer of that than of anything else in the

world."
"Does your poor wrist feel a little easier?"

"Do you let me say that I love you?" was Trenchard's

only answer.

"Have I ever forbidden you? But, now, you see how we are; your wrist is broken, I fear. You are more than a mile from home, and every moment lost will make the doctor's task more painful."

At this moment, voices and hasty steps, not far away from where they were, put a sudden stop to Dora's words

and filled her anew with fear.

"Can you mount and ride home?" she whispered hurriedly to Trenchard. "I am quite safe; I can get

back as I came, by the wood."

It may be imagined what answer Trenchard returned to this. Had he been even more severely crippled than he was, he would certainly not have ridden away from Dora; neither would he have shown his back to his pursuers, supposing that the voices and the footsteps they had just heard were indeed those of the men who had been in ambush. The shot having taken effect on Trenchard's bridle arm, at a moment when his horse was going at a rapid trot, he had lost hold of the rein, and had only succeeded in checking the animal's pace when Dora stopped them both.

"Leave me at once," said Trenchard, "and hide yourself in the wood. It is very unlikely that——"

"Listen," exclaimed Dora; "that is Mr. Nugent's

voice. I am sure."

"'Twas hereabouts the shot was fired; I'll go bail on that," said the voice which had impressed Dora.

"Hullo!" called out Trenchard.

"Hullo to you," replied Anthony; "who are ye?"

"'Tis Mr. Trenchard, sir, I think," replied another voice; and Anthony and Tom Feeney came up.

A Babel of explanations followed. Dora had to tell Anthony how she and Miss Nugent had been stopped on the road directly after he left them, and then had to explain, with as much sang froid as she could command, that she had returned to try and warn Trenchard of the danger, whilst Miss Nugent had driven on for help.

"I should have been in time," she added, "only the

men changed their hiding-place."

"Now, now, did ye do all that? That's my brave astronomer. I declare I'd almost think ye were a Nugent yourself."

Quite convinced that she was, and in daily terror lest the fact should discover itself, Anthony could not help

blurting this out.

If Dora changed countenance, no one was the wiser in the darkness.

All this while Trenchard was suffering intense pain, and he had a mile of ground to cover before he could hope to be at ease. But more welcome assistance was happily at hand. Dr. Maguire, who had been to Carriconna to pay an evening visit to his patient, had heard from Miss Nugent of the encounter on the road, and taking up John Maher beside him, had driven off to have a share in the sport. It was his trap that now pulled up beside the party on the road. The plans were quickly arranged. The doctor must of course drive on the horse; Anthony and John Maher were a sufficient escort for Dora, Carriconna being no further away than Moyrath—though in a different direction—from the point where they were.

Trenchard just contrived to whisper Dora for leave to

write to her.

"Yes," she whispered in reply.

The pedestrians proceeded home without many words. Anthony every now and then burst out with some new expression of admiration of Dora's heroism, which John as enthusiastically echoed.

Dora had her own tumultuous reflections, which prevented her from being conscious of the fatigue which she would otherwise have felt. She lived so much in an imaginative world of her own; and her imagination certainly had not suffered for lack of stimulus within the last few weeks. Latterly, indeed, excitements great and small had been piled one upon the other. These had culminated during a period of ten minutes in her formal acceptance of Trenchard's love. Had she sealed her future at last?

And did she doubt that future? As yet she did not ask herself this question. What woman would have done? She was just then fuller of hope and of content than she had been for years.

When they reached home, Miss Nugent hurried out to receive them.

"Indeed and indeed," said she to Dora, "I've not had a minute's peace since I left you. But you're look

ing quite yourself; so nothing happened, eh? Come in and tell me about it. I declare I never knew a girl like you. And what about the inspector?"

Then the story which Anthony had already listened

to had to be told over again to Barbara.

"But where's Arthur?" asked Anthony all at once.
"Did he go up to bed?"

"He's not coming home at all to-night," said Barbara.

"I've had a message from him."

Anthony noticed nothing unusual in the tone in which his sister made this statement; but Dora saw, or fancied that she saw, a look approaching anxiety on her aunt's face, and certainly there had been a shade of hesitation in her voice.

Anthony, however, was satisfied, and before going upstairs to prepare for dinner he told them that he had effected a temporary reconciliation at Feeney's, which he hoped to complete before long.

"I'll have Tom over here, I think," he said, "and let the old man feel what 'twill be like without him on the

farm."

Anthony left them to go to his own room.

At once, when he had gone, Dora asked Barbara whether anything was wrong with Arthur.

"I thought," she said, "that you looked and spoke a

little anxiously just now."

"My dear Dora," said Miss Nugent, dropping her voice to an excited whisper, "I don't know what I said or how I looked just now, and what's more, I don't know what to think about it."

"About it? About what?" asked Dora, who was seldom unwilling to participate in anybody's excitement.

"I declare I don't know whether to be frightened or glad about it this minute. I don't know whether to laugh or be in fits of fear. But come upstairs and I'll tell you, for dinner will be in directly. My dear," she added breathlessly, whipping a note out of her pocket as she shut the door of Dora's room behind them, "Arthur and Kitty are married!"

# CHAPTER XXXVII.

# ARTHUR'S COUP D'ETAT.

WHILE Arthur had lain in bed during his convalescent period he had plotted desperately. No sooner was Kitty admitted to his presence than he drew her into the plot, a very complacent conspirator. What Arthur had resolved upon was neither more nor less than this, that as soon as he got up he would marry Kitty.

Kitty on her part thought this the most sensible conclusion that Arthur had ever arrived at; though I do not say that she expressed her thought in downright

language.

"It is the best thing that can happen for all of us,"

said Arthur.

"It is the best thing that can happen for us, at all events," said Kitty.

"That goes without saying, dearest," replied Arthur;

"but it is also the best thing for everybody else."

"I wonder if everybody else will think so, Arthur?"

"The only thing is," continued Arthur, "to have mamma on our side."

"Of course, we must have mamma with us, Arthur. I shouldn't dare to move a step otherwise, and indeed, I don't think I should like to. But how are we going to win over mamma?"

"Why, she is three parts with us already," cried

Arthur.

"So she is," assented Kitty; "but do you mean, Arthur, that we are to—to go and do it without saying

anything to Mr. Nugent and Barbara?"

"You see, dearest," said Arthur, "there is no opposition to expect from Aunt Barbara, and I don't know that it matters very much whether we tell her or not. But with his worship it is quite a different affair."

"So it is," answered Kitty with emphatic regret.

"Very well, then, I don't think we'll say anything about it to him until it is all over."

"But do you think that mamma will agree to that, Arthur?"

"I have carefully considered that," replied the astute lover. "You must talk her over, Kitty. You must represent to her that I am not in a state of health to be worried by his unreasonable crotchets. You see, if he were as poor as he used to be, I should not do this at all, for people might then have said that I was in love with the heiress of Doyne; but as it is, you know, I am twice as rich—prospectively at all events—as you are ever likely to be, my love."

"Of course," said Kitty demurely, "and that's one reason why I'm so much in love with you, isn't it?"

"Of course," answered Arthur.

"But I didn't mean you to say 'of course,'" and that point had to be settled in the usual manner.

"Where were we?" said Arthur when the point had

been settled.

"We were talking about your father and his absurdi-

ties," replied Kitty.

"Yes, a large subject," said Arthur; "and now we will go on to your mamma and her—her reasonableness. You will explain to her how much more serviceable I should be as her son, than as a sort of nondescript steward, with no definite authority and no proper control."

"Oh, mamma will see that easily enough, I am sure; but what I am fearful about, Arthur, is what your father will say to us if we really go and do this without so much as asking his permission."

"But, you see," said Arthur, "he has never forbidden

us to marry; he has only-"

"He has only not said that we might," interrupted Kitty.

"What he really did say was 'time enough,'" said Arthur.

"A ridiculous thing for anybody to say," rejoined Kitty.

"You see," said Arthur, "we are both exactly of the same opinion."

"And so we must be right," said Kitty.

"That's just how it strikes me," said Arthur.

"It's a great pity we have anybody else to think about," said Kitty.

"Go to mamma," said Arthur, "and get her on our

side and we won't think about anybody else."

So the plot was hatched; it had still, however, to be developed, and in the interest of developing it Arthur got well with surprising rapidity. But it was Kitty who, until Arthur was able to receive Lady Frayne, managed the delicate business of her mother's capitulation.

"Well, I must say," said her ladyship at last, "I don't see a great deal against it; your father's been a terrible stupid man about this matter, that's for sure. It's a great mistake for young people to get tired of love-making before they're married; I wasn't so foolish myself. We will manage it quietly, Arthur; but I shall tell your father the very next day, and tell him myself."

Lady Frayne privately enjoyed the plot scarcely less than the principals. She knew as well as the rest that Anthony had either transformed himself into a money grubber, or had found some means of lavishing his wealth in which his family were not allowed to participate; but she had little doubt that Arthur would still inherit such a fortune as she had never before dreamt of for Kitty, and she liked to cozen his father by one of those surreptitious devices that Anthony himself delighted in. She did not believe for a moment but that, when he saw Arthur and Kitty married, Anthony would see how foolish he had been in pretending to set a barrier between them, and would thereupon at once relent.

And her ladyship's willingness to bring this affair quickly to what she believed must be its ultimate end, was strengthened by the circumstance of her own unpleasant position at home, for though the boycotting at Doyne was issuing mildly enough, it was still not less

than annoying, and failing Arthur she was without her mainstay. Arthur once her son, she would not fear boycotting in the future.

So it came about that Lady Frayne threw in her part with the secret society that had for its object the secret

marriage of Arthur and Lady Kitty.

Thus much attained, the consummation of the plot was dependent only upon Arthur's complete recovery.

Why not admit Barbara?

Kitty was very anxious to do do this, but Arthur overruled her.

"She would be ill with nervousness and worry," said he; "she would want to tell my father, and that would make her miserable with anxiety; and she would want to keep it from him, and that would make her more miserable. She will be nothing but delighted when she knows that it is done and cannot be undone."

Then arrived the eventful day on which Arthur was to lunch at Doyne. This lunching at Doyne was a mere pitiful pretence. In Arthur's waistcoat pocket, as he and Kitty drove away from Carriconna, while Anthony and Barbara and Dora were trundling at the grey horse's best pace to Rathfarline, were a gold ring and a special licence; and beneath Kitty's winter coat, which fortunately reached to her heels, was a gown of moss green silk and velvet which had only arrived the night before from Dublin.

Luncheon was at Dublin that day and not at Doyne. It was a late luncheon, and Kitty sat down to it as Lady Kitty Nugent.

One should have said something about the bonnet with which Lady Frayne graced the ceremony that preceded the luncheon.

"I have but one daughter to marry," she had said in

buying it an hour before.

After luncheon—it should really have been called a wedding breakfast—Arthur and Kitty started to go southward, by easy stages, along the coast; and Lady Frayne, with the new bonnet in a bandbox, made the best of her way home again. In addition to the new bonnet, she

carried with her the letter which Barbara had whipped from her pocket in Dora's bedroom.

"Married!" exclaimed Dora, "when were they married?"

"This very morning, the dear young scamps."

"But how? where?" persisted Dora. "I thought

Mr. Arthur had gone to lunch at Doyne."

"'Twas the boy's trickery, I declare, and nothing else. 'Deed, I don't know what Anthony will say; but I hope he will try and remember that it's quite the way the Nugents used to do these things in the old time. You see, dear," she went on, "there isn't, in fact, a reason in the world against it, Anthony so rich as he is."

This gave Dora a twinge of compunction. She was on the very verge of discovering to Barbara what she herself had just discovered in the tower. It was not to be supposed that Anthony had in view the settlement of Arthur and Kitty in hoarding up his sovereigns in that subterranean chamber. But Barbara was obviously not fit to receive another shock; moreover, the one that it was in Dora's power to give her, would probably be much more disturbing in its effects than that occasioned by Arthur's letter.

"But tell me," she said, "have they really run away and been married secretly?"

"Well, only as far as we are concerned," answered Barbara; "that's to say, Lady Frayne was with them. But wait, I'll read you his letter."

Putting on her glasses as she spoke, she carried the

sheet of hotel note paper to the candle.

"'My dearest of aunts,'—hasn't he a sweet way with him?—'you will think we have treated you with dreadful shabbiness, but we really did it for your own good'—you see he can think of me through it all—'we both wanted to tell you about it as soon as we had made up our minds'—I declare I'd no notion what he was coming to at all—'but I knew, better than my wife'—the hurry he's in to say my wife; the breath was out of me when I read it—'that it would be unfair on you, and I was

selfish enough, besides, to think you would be better able to help us afterwards with father if you had done nothing to help us beforehand. The end is, that Kitty and I were married in Dublin this morning, with only Lady Frayne to support us. We are now going south for a week to give you time to recover yourselves and bring his worship to reason; and—mamma will tell you the rest to-morrow.'—Mamma too, if you please," said Barbara with, for the first time, the least touch of jealousy in her voice.

But Dora was laughing at the letter, and failed in

consolation on this point.

"And now," said Miss Nugent, as she folded up the letter, "you must be as secret as an owl till I've told my brother myself."

The dinner bell rang, and Miss Nugent had to retreat, leaving Dora to count up the number of secrets which

she must on no account divulge to anybody.

Dora herself retired early that evening, though she punished her curiosity in doing so, for she would greatly have liked to see what reception Anthony gave to the news which his sister had to impart. But as Barbara had begun to signal her from the moment when they entered the drawing-room, and as there was no mistaking the signals—Barbara's need of unbosoming herself increasing with the lapse of seconds—Dora said goodnight after her first cup of tea.

Anthony had been quite taken up during dinner with the unpleasant adventure on the road, which, indeed, gave room for some disquieting reflections. He had now relapsed into the state of taciturnity which had become

almost habitual with him in the evenings.

"Anthony," began his sister, "are ye listening to me?"

"I am," responded Anthony somewhat remotely.

"I've something important, indeed, quite important, that I'd like to tell you at once. You're sure you're listening to me, Anthony?"

"Ah, don't ye see that I am?"
"Tis about Arthur, Anthony."

"He's no worse, is he?" said Anthony, forgetting for the moment that his son had "gone to lunch at Doyne."

"No, thank goodness, I think he's better than ever he was in his life. Isn't it a great thing to have him

well again so quickly, Anthony?"

"'Tis, indeed."

"And it's about Kitty as well as himself that I want to tell you."

"Ho! ho!"

Anthony did not utter that exclamation aloud, but it expressed itself in his change of countenance. He also shifted his attitude in his chair and braced himself to try and furbish up some fresh argument for withholding a little longer the consent that had never yet been wrung from him.

"The truth is," said Barbara mildly, "that Arthur

and Kitty have thought it better to get married."

"They've time enough," said Anthony imperturbably, not having yet fashioned his new argument.

"They're married this minute," said his sister. "They

were married this morning in Dublin."

A terrific and horrific guttural explosion on the part of Anthony began, and as suddenly subsided. It was a manifestation in the nature of a single clap of thunder, which crashes and is silent in the same instant of time.

Anthony had said nothing articulate, and he continued

mute.

Miss Nugent, not without tremors, awaited a development of some sort.

None following, she continued:

"'Twas a little hasty of them, to be sure; but—well, 'tis done now, and you'll not take it unkindly, Anthony, I hope."

"Faith! I'm thinking it's no great matter which way

I take it," said Anthony with dramatic humility.

"Of course it matters everything in the world," returned his sister warmly. "Isn't it you that will be providing for them?"

"Oh, as for providing, if that's what you'd have me

be at, there's room enough and food enough for them here."

"Now, Anthony, I declare, 'tis absurd for you to be talking that way. Sure, how would they live here?"

"Isn't it good enough for them? Is that what ye mean? Well, then, there's Sarah's place—what's this 'tis called?" said the exasperating old man. "Doyne, I mean. Isn't that what she calls it? Wouldn't Doyne be a sweet place for them? Or they might be coming and going maybe, between the two: a month here and a month over there beyant. But will ye tell me, what's Sarah herself going to say to this little frolic of theirs?"

"She was with them when they were married."

- "Was she, now? 'Tis a great Sarah, and no mistake! Well, she'll not be hard on them anyway. She'll be building a new wing for them over there before we know what she's at."
- "'Deed, and she won't, for ye know very well, Anthony, that she couldn't afford it. Now, there's Gravelmount, Anthony, which is everything in the world they want—"

"'Gad! 'tis modest they are, the pair of them."

- "Now, Anthony, come, come! Be a good reasonable man, and don't be shilly-shallying any more. Sure, you know you were meaning to get the place for them, and why don't you do it at once in a nice kind way? Isn't Arthur the only child you have? And you always so fond of Kitty, and always promising you'd be settling them both one of these days. What's hindering you that you can't do it now?"
- "I never said a word about getting Gravelmount, upon me honour."

"But you meant to do it, now, didn't you?"

"'Deed, I don't know that I'd say that either. I say what I said just now, that there's a power of room for them here. Let them come here if they like, and welcome. Kitty's a nice bright thing to have about a house. I wouldn't object to her at all; no, not a bit in the world."

This attitude, which Anthony had assumed on the

impulse of the moment, chiefly because he did not know what other to take up, he resolutely maintained, both

with Barbara and Lady Frayne.

He was very seldom at the trouble of excusing himself in his own eyes, but in this instance he satisfied himself that his own conduct was justified by the conduct of the newly married pair; and he was secretly delighted that they had married each other without his consent or knowledge, since it gave him an additional and more plausible pretext for adhering to his old policy.

Lady Frayne was less disturbed than Barbara; feeling sure that Anthony would be obliged soon to face the situation as it now stood. Meanwhile, she said they should both live at Doyne and for as long as they liked.

Arthur was kept somewhat in the dark for awhile as to the condition of affairs at home. Barbara, of course, had lost no time in covering two sheets of paper with her congratulations, but she was reticent in regard to Anthony.

Anthony's felicitations, however, followed his sister's in a day or two, and in a postscript he once more repeated the obnoxious formula that there was plenty of room, even for the pair of them, at home.

This postscript took Arthur rather aback.

# CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### DORA'S DECISION.

It will be guessed that Barbara lost no time in acquainting Dora with the poor result of her conversation with Anthony. She took an early opportunity after breakfast the next morning, when Anthony had gone out to make some inquiries amongst his own people in reference to the extraordinary affair of the previous evening.

"You know," said Barbara, "Arthur won't come

home at all when he hears of this."

It must be confessed that Dora had to put some pressure upon herself in order to exhibit all the sympathy that Miss Nugent expected from her at this crisis.

There were two ways of considering Arthur's marriage, and Dora was not at all sure that she would not have shown some such front as Anthony had done in a similar situation. But she did not suggest this to Miss Nugent; and in any case, she did not greatly trust her own judgment in anything that concerned Arthur, being quite conscious that the bias of her inclinations was not in his favour.

What she did long to tell Barbara was, that in dealing with Anthony they had a miser to deal with now; therein lying the secret of his otherwise unaccountable refusal to deal fairly by his son and heir. For it was no fault of Arthur's that he had dallied at home inactive. Anthony had kept him there, feeding him with false expectations.

But suppose Dora were to admit Miss Nugent to the secret of the tower. Anthony had behaved very mildly in the matter of the marriage, but Dora guessed that he would put on a very different face when that other matter were brought home to him. And as for herself, she did not doubt that he would send her packing when

he knew her as the author of his undoing.

But just now Dora had more need than ever to continue in the favour that she had always enjoyed from Anthony. She did not intend to make a runaway match herself. She had done that once in her life, and she had no desire that the history of her first marriage should repeat itself in any one particular. Anything but that; if she were really to marry again it should be with due *tclat*, and her bridegroom should take her from the hands of Anthony himself.

"What is it that's the matter with him, can you

imagine?" said Miss Nugent.

"Mr. Nugent, do you mean?" asked Dora.

"Yes. A year ago he had no notion in the world, except that Arthur should settle down here and take over everything by-and-by just as the son of a Nugent of Carriconna should do. And even when Arthur came

home his father was full of schemes for him; but now he seems positively jealous of the boy. I don't know what's come to him at all."

"But at the worst, you see, it can only be an affair of time," said Dora. "Mr. Arthur will inherit everything, of course."

Dora said this rather with a view to sounding Miss Nugent as to the manner and terms in which her father had bequeathed his fortune to his brother; for that was an important point upon which she had never learned

any particulars.

"He will inherit Carriconna, certainly," replied Miss Nugent; "but as to his new fortune, Anthony may do as he pleases with that. Our brother in Australia left it to him without any conditions at all. But isn't it a strange thing what he can be doing with the money? He spends nothing here, at any rate; he never says a word about it to me; and I declare I know no more than his telescope where the money is, nor how he's using it, if he's using it at all."

It was, as may be imagined, terribly difficult for Dora The intimacy and kindness of her to keep silence. relations with Barbara made her long to tell everything; but beyond the private reason she had for preserving her secret, she really did not suppose that it would add much to Barbara's comfort were she to put her in posses-

sion of it.

"If," she said to Barbara, "Mr. Arthur and Lady Kitty go to live at Doyne, Doyne being so close to this, Mr. Nugent won't like to leave them there very long without arranging something for both of them. I am sure he won't."

"He's a dreadfully obstinate man," said Miss Nugent,

"and that's the worst of it."

"I don't think you need be afraid that he is spending his money on himself, at all events," said Dora; "he is preparing some great surprise, perhaps; and he'll drive us all over to Gravelmount one day," she added laughing, "and it will be sumptuously arranged for the young couple."

"I hope he'll not furnish it on his own responsibility, though," said Miss Nugent, echoing Dora's laugh. "Here's the post, and there's only one letter."

The letter was handed to Dora, who, as this particular missive was not unexpected, received it with a great pretence of unconcern.

"It is from Mr. Trenchard," she said. "He told me that he would write a line in the evening."

"To be sure," said Miss Nugent cordially, "no doubt he'd write. I hope Maguire set his arm nicely."

"We shall see," said Dora, opening the letter.

When she had got to the bottom of the page and turned it over, she could not very well prevent Miss Nugent from seeing that the letter extended to the end of the third page. Dora read it as quickly as she could for decency's sake, and folded it in a manner which said plainly that the letter was not intended for general perusal.

"And how's the arm?" said Miss Nugent.

"The arm?" said Dora; she hesitated, glanced at the letter again and laughed. "He does not mention it," she said.

"I declare, now, I thought it was broken," said Miss

Nugent.

"So did I," said Dora; "and so it was, I'm sure."

"And what's all that about, then?" asked Barbara with blunt friendly directness.

"He proposes to marry me," said Dora.

"I never had such a year in my life!" was Barbara's response. There's Arthur home from Africa, and your coming here, and the fortune, and the telescope, and the boycotting at Doyne, and brain fevers and elopements, and myself stopped on the road in my own car, and Trenchard wants to marry you. Was it because you went to meet him on the road last night?"

"Well, he said something about it before," said Dora

modestly, "and-"

"And so, of course, you wouldn't like him to be shot at. Well, now, though I never thought of it before—I've so many things on my mind these times—I'm not a bit surprised at you or at him. It isn't at all reasonable,

dear, when one comes to think of it, that a girl like you should pass unnoticed in such a place as this; and Trenchard has just waited till he found the best wife he could have."

If Dora winced a little at this, it was without showing

"I tell you, I am downright glad," added Miss Nugent.

"Am I to say 'yes,' then?"

"Sure, my dear, didn't you say 'yes' in going to warn him last night?"

"But," expostulated Dora, "I really think I should have done that for any person in whom—in whom I was interested."

"Well, I really believe you would, dear," said Miss "But in an ordinary case, you know, Nugent warmly.

it would really want a good deal of courage."

"Thank you, dear Miss Nugent; but I don't think I need mind telling you that it would have been harder

to do for anybody else than for Mr. Trenchard."

"To be sure, dear," replied Miss Nugent; "to be sure. Then you'll marry him? If you're going away from here, I'd like to have you no farther off than Moyrath. And I think myself that he's a jewel of a man."

"Who's that is a jewel of a man?" inquired Anthony,

breaking in upon the conversation.

"Mr. Trenchard," said Barbara; "did you hear how he is, Anthony?"

"I did, and saw him. I went over there. He has his arm set, and he's about again this morning."

"And did you hear anything about those bold men?"

"Not a word; but there's no doubt the Caseys were

I'll be rid of them before the year's out."

"'Deed I'd give them no grace," said Barbara emphatically, who had generally been the peacemaker betwixt Anthony and his tenants on the rare occasions when they had fallen out.

"Mr. Trenchard's arm was not so badly broken, I

hope?" said Dora.

"He put it off as nothing," replied Anthony, "and

Maguire said it was a very clean affair, and will heal in no time. He'll have to go afoot for a while, but that's the most he'll suffer."

"He's not so unfortunate at all," said Miss Nugent

with a little side look and a smile at Dora.

Dora read her letter again alone. Its three pages closely written were transferred by that second reading to the tablets of her heart. No love letters but the silly ones are amusing to the general. Trenchard's was grave amid its passion. A few sentences are enough to retranscribe.

"You know," he wrote, "who I am that offer myse!f to you. Is there one woman in the world but you whom such a man as I dare ask to share his life? But, loving you as I do, I have but now little fear of myself. Love shall have the victory over all . . . . But, Dora, do not leave me too long alone. If you will marry me, let us hazard it quickly; I fear to lose you." "I will." said Dora.

# CHAPTER XXXIX.

#### ARTHUR AND A FRIEND TALK CONFIDENTIALLY.

ARTHUR and his bride were back again in Dublin, where Kitty had begged for a day or two of sight-seeing and shopping. Their return had been delayed a little on Anthony's account, but that redoubtable man continued unmoved, and Lady Frayne had said she could no longer dispense with Arthur's assistance at Doyne. His father's obduracy, which Kitty treated as a joke, affected Arthur more seriously. It was not at all to his liking, neither had it been any part of his scheme, to settle himself as a dependant upon Lady Frayne; but his present allowance from his father was insufficient for a comfortable married maintenance.

Arthur was galled in his spirit and uneasy; he had withstood Anthony in nothing, and he had a right to

expect an only son's portion from a wealthy father. The course he had taken had seemed to him a quite legitimate method of attempting to force his father's hand; its failure or success so far was the more annoying and disquieting that he knew for how long a period Anthony was capable of maintaining his ground; and if this disappointment could not have been said quite to have overshadowed their honeymoon, it had hung over Arthur, at least, like a little cloud in his serene.

Kitty's enjoyment was full and complete. She said twenty times a day that she did not care twopence where or how they lived, since, in whatever circumstances, they must at any rate live together; unimpeachable honeymoon sentiments, which of course were greatly sustaining to Arthur. Kitty had him all under her own control; took on little airs of authority, on the plea that Arthur was still an invalid, and must be dieted and otherwise kept within bounds, which meant that he must never be allowed to go out without his wife. To all of which Arthur submitted with exemplary contentment.

A day or two after their arrival in Dublin they met in Grafton Street an old school friend of Kitty's, who, hearing then for the first time of the change in her little ladyship's fortunes, insisted on taking her home there and then to afternoon tea, for a further and more detailed recital; Arthur being dismissed to return to the hotel alone. His way took him past his father's bank; and in sight of the bank he was startled at seeing his father leave it, staggering under the weight of the celebrated and mysterious portmanteau. He had a car in waiting for him on to which, with the assistance of the carman, the bag was hoisted and Anthony, taking his seat beside it, was driven off. Arthur, standing within the shelter of the shop door, had watched the proceeding.

When the car had disappeared down the street an impulse seized him to enter the bank, the junior partner in which had been a college friend of his at Trinity.

The bank was just closing and the junior partner on the point of leaving. John Tresidder, the junior partner, was son to the principal, and the bank of Tresidder and Co. had transacted the Carriconna business for generations.

"Your father has just been here," said Arthur's friend

to him.

"Has he?" said Arthur, who did not care to say that he had just watched his father's departure from the bank.

Perceiving from Tresidder's words that his father had evidently made no mention of his marriage, Arthur went on to communicate that piece of information, and to receive the rather astonished congratulations of the junior partner.

"Why, he never said a word about it," said Tre-

sidder.

"He's hardly got over it himself yet," said Arthur.

"So he's been here again to-day."

"Yes, we've seen a great deal of him lately. But, I say, where are you going, Nugent? Are you staying in town?"

"For a day or two," answered Arthur. "Look here, we are not five minutes from the hotel; come over and have a chat. Stay and dine if you will."

"Can't dine; but I've got an hour to spare, so let's go

across."

As they went to the hotel Arthur deliberated how he could best say what he had on his mind without confessing his entire ignorance as to his father's affairs. His friend, however, smoothed the way for him by remarking suddenly:

"By the way, Arthur, I don't believe I've seen you since you came home, that's to say since the Carriconna balance went up so suddenly. Nice luck for you to get

a wife like that and a fortune within six months."

"Well, I've got the wife anyway," laughed Arthur, "and to a man of my taste that's the better part of the two. But between ourselves, up to the present, I haven't seen a great deal of the fortune."

"Eh?" said his friend, "then what has your father

been drawing at such a rate for?"

"Gad! I know a great deal less about it than you do, Jack," returned Arthur not feeling too comfortable.

"But you know how he's been drawing on us, I

suppose?"

"Not a bit," answered Arthur. And having said this

much, he was compelled to say more.

"The fact is, my dear fellow," confessed Arthur, "we none of us know what has come to the old gentleman lately. He spends no money on the place, and as far as we can see none on himself, and talks as if he were poorer than ever. He bought a telescope, and rigged up the tower as an observatory, and engaged a lady to teach him astronomy; but those have been his only visible expenses, and they can't have amounted to much."

"That's odd," says Tresidder; "for I may tell you in confidence—in strict confidence, of course—that your father has been reducing his balance steadily for a long while past. That venerable portmanteau has become a joke in the bank; but he has carried away thousands in

it."

It was Arthur's turn now to express amazement.

"Thousands!" he cried; "you must be joking, Iack."

"It's a fact, upon my word. My governor said the other day that your father must be gravelling Carriconna with gold."

"What in the name of wonder can he be doing with

it?" asked Arthur.

"Our only idea has been that he is making secret investments," replied Tresidder. "It's a fascinating game

when you begin it."

"Yes, and a precious risky one, I should think, for any one as ignorant of it as the old gentleman must be. Why, he never had a shilling to invest until he got this money from my uncle. What does he know about investment?"

"Would you like me to say anything to my father?" asked Tresidder; "he might say a word to yours on the subject. Only, as you know," he added, "we, of course,

cannot prevent him doing just what he pleases with the

balance he has at our place."

"No," replied Arthur; "and what is worse, I am afraid nobody can. But I don't see that any mischief can be done if your father were to say something. He knows him well enough to be able to do that."

"I'd better tell my father, I suppose, that I've seen

you," said Tresidder.

"Yes, you can tell him that; only don't let my father know that any suggestion came from me; he won't be in town again just yet, I expect."

"He has been to us every ten days or so for some

months past," said Tresidder.

This was all they said upon that subject, and the conversation passed to Arthur's marriage, and his prospects therewith connected. Tresidder had left before Kitty returned. Arthur decided to say little to her in reference to what he had heard; he would talk it over first with Barbara.

# CHAPTER XL.

#### A WEDDING AND A STORM.

DORA had not left herself much space for self-questionings, or debatings, as to whether she should, or should not, marry Trenchard. She had, in effect, given him her answer on the night when they met upon the road. But she did, of course, consider with herself once again, and long and deeply, before she sent an answer to his letter. True, she could not well have retreated at this moment; on the other hand, she had not, upon full and final consideration, any desire to do so.

To begin with, she was in love with Trenchard, and that would at any time have been reason enough for her. On the practical side, she would gain what it had been one of her chief objects in life to gain, since the days of her poverty in Paris, the ample and solid comforts of a wealthy home. Neither had she much fear for the future as touching Trenchard. Her influence, added to his own moral strength, would aid him to redeem himself.

So on the evening of the day that she received his letter she sat down and wrote that she would marry him.

Breakfast was scarcely over the next morning when she saw his tall lithe figure coming up the drive. He carried his arm in a sling, and walked rather slowly, but there was animation in his face and cheer in his voice as he cried "good morning" to Anthony, who was just setting out from his house. Trenchard turned about with him, and they paced the drive together.

"Is he telling Uncle Anthony?" wondered Dora. Then she said to herself, "I have not yet told him that it is Uncle Anthony. I have not yet told him who I am. I must tell him that; but what does it matter? I have been an adventuress, but I have done no wrong. I shall tell him all about it though; yes, I shall tell him why I came here from Paris. Uncle Anthony looks astonished. Edmund must certainly be proposing for me."

Dora was sitting in the window of the dining-room, following with her gaze Trenchard and Anthony, as those two walked up and down the avenue. Trenchard was speaking with evident earnestness; Anthony's expression was mixed of astonishment and disquiet. The subtler facial expressions are not easily translated, even if the physiognomist be practised, but the common and elementary emotions discover themselves readily on a countenance the least mobile. It was easy to see that Anthony was surprised at the communication he was receiving from Trenchard, and also that it was partly displeasing to him.

Trenchard was, in fact, giving Anthony to know that he desired to marry Anthony's astronomer. So far Dora

had guessed rightly.

When she saw that Anthony did not look quite satisfied, she flattered herself with the notion that he was unwilling to lose her as his helper; for though the astronomical studies had become little more than nominal, it had grown into a habit with Anthony to ask Dora's opinion—which was his way of asking for her advice—on nearly everything that he did.

In truth, however, it was not the prospect of losing a good and sympathetic counsellor that made Anthony uncomfortable when Trenchard told him he wished to take

Dora from Carriconna.

"If she marries him," thought Anthony, "she'll never do it till she's told him who she is. The pair of them will be down upon me then for my money. 'Tis a dowry they'll be wanting."

It had become, as will be seen, a fixed idea with Anthony that Dora was his niece; though, beyond a single slip once mentioned, Dora had never by look, or word, or act betrayed her relationship to him. Anthony, however, fancy soon passed into belief, and belief crystallized into conviction; and he was as certain that Dora was his niece as that Barbara was his sister. "Wasn't it a pity, now, that I couldn't marry her to Arthur?" That project, however, he had, perforce, long since abandoned; it having been made abundantly clear to him that Arthur would not marry Dora, and that Dora would not marry Arthur. But the dread lest others should learn what he was persuaded had been revealed to him, and he should be compelled to disgorge when Dora's identity were made known, haunted him perpetually. It was to secure himself against pillage that he had been diligently secreting his fortune in the tower vault; but with the miser's greed upon him he would not believe it safe even there.

Clearly, however, there was not the shadow of an objection that Anthony could set up against Trenchard's proposal of marriage with Dora. He heard it, and said Dora would make a jewel of a wife, and that Trenchard would be "set up entirely" if he succeeded in getting her word. As for Trenchard, he, of course, could not suspect any arrière pensée in Anthony's mind, and the old man's consenting nod, which closed the colloquy, sent him with a yet gayer heart into the presence of

Dora. Barbara had dived into the kitchen when she

saw Trenchard coming.

Trenchard did not speak for a moment, but stood looking into her eyes, with both her hands clasped in his one.

"Are you not afraid, dearest?" he said at last.

"No," she replied simply, but with a depth of tone that carried full conviction to him. "You have been speaking to Mr. Nugent," she went on with a smile.

"Yes; how did you know that?"

"Oh, I could read it in both your faces."

- "I wanted to make it difficult for you to draw back," he said.
- "Did you think then that I might want to draw back?"

"I shall not feel certain of you till I have you all for my own," answered Trenchard.

- "But see," said Dora, with a little low laugh, "you do not know who I am yet. You have not asked me anything about myself. How do you know what sort of person I may be? I might be a Fenian agent, or the emissary of some revolutionary society abroad, sent over here to foment disturbance, and you know there really has been a dreadful amount of disturbance since I came."
- "But this would be capital," exclaimed Trenchard, for you could betray all your secrets to me. Would you tell me all your secrets, Dora?"

"I would, and I will," she answered.

"Good, but then you have none to tell, I am sure."

"Do not be too confident, sir; but tell me, what did Mr. Nugent say, and what are you going to give him in exchange for me?"

"He will still have the telescope, you know."

"I think he will want to send that after me; he is beginning to believe that it is the evil genius of the place."

"Then we will build our own observatory," said Trenchard, "and you shall teach the stars to me. But, Dora, beloved one, tell me, when will you marry me?"

"When do you wish it?" she asked in answer.

"I wish it now, at once," he said earnestly, almost pleadingly. "I would wish it to-day or to-morrow, if it might be possible."

Dora was silent. It was no occasion for coquetry.

"Let it be as soon as you please," she said, after the briefest pause. "That is to say," she added, with the tender smile which she gave only to him, "let it be soon, if you desire it so. Only, you know, we must not shock the feelings of anybody. One runaway marriage will serve Carriconna for the present."

"Do not be afraid that I will bring any kind of reproach upon you," said Trenchard. "But I want you, Dora! I want your love, your help, every hour of the day. And if you are willing, what is there to hinder us? I had already arranged for leave of absence; I can be free at any time. Can we not utilize my leave?"

"Let us do that," assented Dora. "After all, what does a little time matter? Whom have we to consult

but ourselves?"

Barbara's voice was heard in the hall, and Dora called to her. Barbara came in, and if you will believe it, she had been upstairs and put on her Sunday dress, that she might offer her congratulations in suitable attire.

Well, to which of you shall I speak first?" inquired Barbara, with a wealth of good wishes for both beaming

in her eyes.

"To me," said Trenchard, "for I am the most to be congratulated."

Miss Nugent gave her hand to each in turn, and said

she would congratulate them both alike.

"And have you fixed when it's to be?" said she. "You're not for running off like that other pair, I suppose?"

"We are for running off as soon as we can, though," said Trenchard; "at least, if you will add your counsel

to mine, Miss Nugent."

"Sure, what have I to say to it?" exclaimed Miss Nugent. "And you don't think, I hope, that I want to drive Mrs. Lytton out of the house."

"I want my wife to spend Christmas with me," said Trenchard demurely. -

"Will you ever be ready by that time?" asked Barbara of Dora.

"Of course it will depend upon the style in which he

wants me to marry him," replied Dora serenely.

"You should marry me as you are," said Trenchard, "if you would. But come, will you say before Christ-.. mas?"

"May I say that, Miss Nugent?"

"'Twill be a lonely Christmas here without you, dear; but I suppose it would be lonelier for your—for Mr. Trenchard. I have a great receipt of my grandmother's for a wedding cake somewhere. I haven't had to look for it these twenty years, and I wonder could I find it?"

So Trenchard carried this point, and it was settled that he and Dora should be married not later than Christmas.

Trenchard went home, feeling as though he had been For months past his life had been on the whole a wretched one; brief periods of happiness and health alternating with long periods of profound melancholy, and a condition of body which rendered difficult and irksome the discharge of the smallest and most ordinary duties of his official and private life. This is the opium eater's state, so soon, at least, as he begins the effort to renounce the passion. Before he knew Dora, he had half brought himself to believe that he was destined to pass the remainder of his life in this most miserable thraldom. Falling in love with her, a new vista had suddenly opened before him. The mere presence of Dora, who seemed to him the embodiment of womanly courage and self-reliance, inspired and had, as it were, an electrical effect upon him. Had Dora been merely soft and gentle, it is probable that Trenchard would never have allowed himself to love her. But in Trenchard's eyes Dora had so much more than the merely feminine charm; the healthy vigour of her nature was no less attractive than her beauty; it opposed itself so splendidly and with such bracing effect to what was weak and morbid in himself.

And it appeared to him now that the fresh life just opening out before him held promise of the emancipation he had almost despaired of. He was prepared now to wrestle with his tempter as he had never done before; to have him under, to finish him.

The faithful sergeant observed the change in his master's countenance, as he stood at Trenchard's side during luncheon, and cut up his meat for him.

"William," said Trenchard presently, "I am going to

be married."

"Indeed, sir," answered the sergeant. 'Twas the least that any one could have said in the circumstances, but the inflection of the sergeant's voice conveyed a good deal more than his words. He even paused in handing a dish to Trenchard, and that action also spoke somewhat.

"Can you guess the lady's name, William?" pursued his master.

"Well, sir, yes, of course I can, with your leave, sir." The sergeant had by this time recovered his habitual sang froid.

"And what is your opinion, William?"

"Well, sir, if you will pardon me, I think it's the best thing for—for all of us."

Trenchard smiled.

"Yes, sir; and if I might say a word more, I'm downright glad; and I take the liberty to offer my congratulations."

"Thank you, William; but you need not talk of liberty. You will tell Mrs. Jones. I think, William, we shall be married before Christmas."

"A happy Christmas, I am sure, sir."

"Thank you, William, thank you; indeed I have much to thank you for, William, both you and your wife. I trust that there are brighter days in store for all of us."

This was Trenchard's way of saying that the sergeant and his wife were not to consider the days of their service numbered because Moyrath was about to receive a mistress.

"The best of masters, sir," said the sergeant, with a little tremor in his voice, as he bowed himself out of the room.

When Dora had given Trenchard her promise to marry him before the end of the year, she too began to feel that life was opening anew for her; and a sense of happy restfulness, such as she had not at any time known before, softened all her being. This notwithstanding that she was not wholly at ease within her-Her two secrets possessed and harassed her. Could she marry Trenchard, leaving him in ignorance of herself? She was even bitter, a little, at the thought of his implicit belief in her.

"If he knew me for the adventuress I am," she repeated to herself over and over again, and always with

added scorn of self.

One afternoon, when all was quiet at Carriconna, she stole down again to the vault where Anthony had stacked

his gold, and stood there contemplating it.

"It was this that lured me here in a false character; I came to get this," nodding contemptuously at the swelling money-bags; "and—let me say once for all to myself—I did not care then by what means I was to get it:" and she added for the hundredth time, Edmund only knew me for the adventuress I am."

As she said it, something flashed upon her mind; all at once she was revealed to herself another woman. sort of wild delight shone upon her beautiful face.

"I am no adventuress," she cried. "I have put all that behind me."

It was true.

Standing there, within sight and touch of the miserable wealth, she realized, as by an inspiration, that it had become as dust to her. She had renounced her worser self, and, as it seemed, by no effort of her own.

She stood purged of the wicked greed that had animated and controlled her. She stood then in a new attitude towards the man she loved—the man she had promised to marry. She was no longer the Dora she had been; that Dora had suddenly died within her. Why tell Trenchard that she had ever existed?

No; let the dead past bury its dead.

The name she bore was her own; she would go to Trenchard as Dora Lytton, the stranger widow, Anthony Nugent's paid assistant.

Trenchard had not sought to know her past, and now that that past was buried, she would not uncover the

sod upon it.

The winter days went by with frost and bitter wind, snow gusts, and now and then a storm that lashed the lake into waves and played fiercely around the tower.

Anthony's face had grown more favourable, for Dora appeared to have maintained the discreetest silence, and the money-bags in consequence remained safe in

the stone chamber.

The day of the wedding began disconsolately enough, as far as the skies were concerned—grey and sullen skies with not a light streak in them. All the morning the atmosphere betokened some imminent disturbance, and as the three at Carriconna were rising from breakfast, Anthony remarked that it was well they had settled to go to church at an early hour.

"It was just such a day," said he, "as I remember twenty years ago at this season, when the great thunderstorm took the top of the tower off. I think I'll run up to the observatory before we start, and see that the

telescope is fast."

They had three miles to drive to the church, and

were to start shortly after ten o'clock.

Dora had resisted Barbara's entreaties that she should be married in full bridal array; but in a close-fitting dress of soft dark grey cloth, heavily trimmed with blue fox fur, she looked bewitching.

Trenchard met them at the church, and with Barbara and Anthony for their only witnesses, they were married.

"It isn't a long good-bye, you know," said Dora to her aunt, whose eyes were a little dewy when the parting words were being said in the vestry. "We shall soon be back to settle at Moyrath."

"'Deed I hope you will, dear. I'll be quite lonely till

I have you near me again."

"You have been so good to me," said Dora, "both you and Mr. Nugent."

"I declare we've had reason to be," cried Miss

Nugent.

"We have, upon me word," added Anthony, who, feeling that the money-bags were secure, could afford to let loose the real regret he felt at losing Dora.

Trenchard and Dora drove straight to the station. The day still lowered, and grew hourly worse.

In the afternoon, Anthony hovered uneasily around the tower, glancing up constantly at the frail wooden structure which held the telescope. The sky began to be packed with storm-clouds, the wind was rising, and at long intervals there were little flashes of lightning, followed immediately by a spluttering of distant thunder. The clouds had not yet actually broken into storm, but their aspect and movements grew more and more threatening as the afternoon wore on.

Anthony let himself into the tower, went down to his treasure-chamber, and looked over his bags, but without any sense of insecurity. "There's no danger to these,

storm or not," said he.

A great burst and roaring of wind aroused him from contemplation of his hoard. He quitted the chamber, and mounted the stone stairs to the ground floor of the tower. It had suddenly grown almost dark. Anthony was on the point of letting himself out, when he changed his mind, and began to climb up to the observatory. The wind, rising rapidly to a hurricane, shrieked through the slits in the walls, and the air seemed to darken at every step that Anthony took upwards. As he came out upon the floor of the observatory, the blast smote him full; and sturdy as the old man was, he was fain to lay hold of the iron rail which he had had placed breasthigh all around the observatory storey. Yet the storm had not yet fairly reached Carriconna. Through the

gathering darkness Anthony could see it rushing forward from points not far distant, where it had already broken, and was beating down with fearful force. The lake, one side of which lay all open to the quarter whence the storm was blowing, began to be in big waves, frothcrested.

Anthony's fears were chiefly for the telescope, which, early in the day, he had made as fast as possible within its wooden housing; but, holding on by the rail, he peered over the edge of the tower to a spot, a few feet below, where the masonry had been strengthened by stout metal clamps.

Having seen that he could do nothing more for the safety of the telescope, he began to creep along the rail

towards the open trap in the floor.

All at once the storm burst in its might over and around Carriconna. A cloud of shingle swirled up, and was dashed to a height of fifty feet against the tower. The solid arched floor beneath Anthony's feet seemed to rise up at him, and the upper length of the tower quivered, throbbed and swayed. A blinding rain blotted out the landscape, and in an instant the darkness was absolute. Then the darkness was dissipated by a flash of lightning that changed the black vault above into a white flame. It showed Anthony standing erect with his bare grey head uplifted and dauntless against the storm, of which, for the space of a second, he looked like the controlling spirit. But amid the double night that succeeded to that brief, unearthly light, a crash was heard above the thunder, the wind and the rain.

"Oh, may Heaven help us!" cried Barbara, rushing into the hall, where the terrified servants met her. "Don't you think that's a thunderbolt has struck the

tower? and I believe the master's in it."

### CHAPTER XLI.

#### WHERE IS ANTHONY?

Almost as Barbara spoke the storm subsided; and as suddenly as it had descended it drifted away. Rain continued to fall, but with greatly diminished violence; the air grew clearer, and though it was now nearly dusk, there was light for seeing. When Barbara and the servants got the hall door open and emerged upon the terrace, cries broke from them. The work of the thunderbolt was visible enough in the twilight. The two upper storeys of the tower were gone.

Where was the observatory? Where was the tele-

scope? Where was Anthony?

Barbara, pale and shaking, was beside herself with sickening anxiety.

"Anthony!" she called. "Anthony!" and continued

calling on her brother.

Then wringing her hands as she appealed to the servants, "Where had he been seen last? Was any one with him when he went out?"

No Anthony responded to the wailing cries of Barbara; and the servants, scarcely less distracted than

Miss Nugent, had little comfort to give her.

"Come down to the tower," said Barbara, and huddling a shawl over her head, she hurried down the garden, heading the servants, amongst whom John Maher and Kate Quinn kept close at her skirts.

Close under the tower, on the side next the lake, were some of the peasants of the estate, whom the crash had brought hurriedly to the spot, and who were clamouring around one man, that appeared to be attempting some sort of explanation.

"What is it you're saying?" demanded Barbara.

"Did any of you see the master?"

"Oh, Miss Barbara, I saw him, indade I did," said the man in the centre of the group, "and I'd rather my own eyes had been blinded than I had looked on such a sight. I was beyant there, crouching under the hill, miss, and when the terrible shthreak o' lightnin' came just now, I seen the masther up on the tower there houldin' by the rail. That's all I seen, miss; 'twas the blackness o' night the next moment."

"Oh, wirra, wirra!" wailed the people; "where's the

poor masther now, at all?"

Great blocks of stone cumbered all the ground beneath the tower, and amongst them were strewn the fragments of the luckless telescope. But the wreckage that covered the torn and sodden grass seemed less in quantity than it should have been, having regard to the extent of the tower's ruin. It must have been that much of the riven and dislodged masonry had fallen inside the tower, of which about two-thirds was still standing, solid and unhurt.

Not a sign of Anthony; the tension of the situation

became less endurable every moment.

"Try the door of the tower," said Barbara, who had hard work to preserve her composure amid the excited and conflicting counsels and suggestions of the little crowd.

John Maher put his shoulder to the door, but it withstood all his efforts. Two other men went to his assistance, but there was evidently some stout opposing force on the other side.

"Take some of those stones and break it in," said

Miss Nugent.

By this time the rain had ceased, and the storm had quite blown over. A quarter moon shone in the sky, dismantled of clouds, and lanterns fetched from the

house eked out the moonlight.

The door when driven in was found to have been blocked on the inside with stones which had fallen from above; and which, so far as could be seen, extended in a compact mass from the floor up to what was now the top storey of the tower. There was still no appearance of Anthony, and some hours must elapse before a passage could be forced upwards; a dangerous as well

as a difficult task, for stones began to shower down from above as soon as the workers commenced to move those

that encumbered the first steps of the staircase.

Barbara saw that she could be of no help here, but as she went wearily back to the house with Kate, she bethought her of one whose aid might perhaps be needed before long. If the peasant's story were true that he had seen Anthony on the tower at the moment when the storm was at its height, what conclusion remained to be drawn but that he had been borne down with the rush of loosened stones which now choked the whole interior of the tower?

Barbara sent an urgent message to Dr. Maguire, imploring him to come to her at once, and a telegram to

Arthur which said simply: "Come home at once."

Then she sat down to wait.

Poor Barbara's situation at this turn of affairs was

pitiable in the extreme.

Arthur and Kitty, with Lady Frayne, were still in Dublin, where they had decided to remain until the new year. Trenchard and his bride were to leave Dublin that night, and their whereabouts for some weeks to come would be known only to themselves. For the moment, therefore, Barbara was left with no near help beyond that of her own household.

# CHAPTER XLIL

### ANTHONY IS FOUND. .

Though Barbara began by sitting down to wait, she did not sit long. Consumed by a feverish anxiety, she went to and fro between the tower and the house; a figure to evoke sympathy, carelessly covered up in wraps of various sorts, through which a pale, distracted face glimmered sadly and wistfully.

The work of removing the débris went on slowly, so difficult was it to avoid injury when once the shattered masonry began to be loosened. At the end of two tedious and painful hours, the workers came upon cruel traces; there were drops of fresh blood upon the stones. At a distance of a few feet above this spot was found the inanimate form of Anthony himself. His fall had been arrested by a wooden beam, which had formed a support of one of the floors, but he had struck the beam with his head, and his escape from immediate death had been purchased at the cost of a fractured head. bled profusely, and the rigid and colourless face had the air of death. Indeed, they thought him dead at first, and it was as one dead that they carried him to the house; but the doctor, who had that minute arrived, just touched him, and admonished the men who supported the head to hold it differently.

Barbara, who bore herself with the fortitude that some women have better at command than most men in these crises, was for having him into the dining-room, but Dr.

Maguire said briefly:

"Take him to his own room."

Anthony was laid upon his bed, and his sister and the doctor were alone with him.

Barbara stood silent with compressed lips, and would not trouble the doctor with a question. Maguire made his examination silently, then turned to Barbara and said:

"We have him with us still, anyhow."

"Thank God for that!" whispered Barbara; "but how is he? Tell me just how he his. It's very bad with him, isn't it?"

"'Tis so," said Maguire; "I couldn't say different.

How long did he lie in the tower there?"

"Two hours and more."

During this brief talk, which had been in a whisper on Barbara's part, and in the normal tone on the doctor's, the doctor had been busy with sponge and towel, band age and cordial.

"Now give me five minutes," said he, "and I'll get

him into bed. Have you sent for Arthur?"

"I have," said Miss Nugent. "They're in Dublin still, but I hope I'll have Arthur to-morrow morning."

"Go down now, like a good woman, and I'll call for

you directly. Send John to me."

In a few minutes Dr. Maguire went down to Barbara

in the drawing-room.

"I'll put the night up with you," he said. "Let my man come up, and I'll send him home with a message."

"Do you find him worse than you expected?" asked

Miss Nugent anxiously, as she rang the bell.

"My dear Miss Nugent," answered the doctor, "I won't keep from you that Anthony is in a very dangerous way. That's a terrible wound he has in the head; and the loss of blood—he has bled greatly."

"What can you do, doctor? Is there anything to be got? You know I trust him to you entirely; but will

you consult with anybody?"

"I will do that to-morrow," said the doctor; "We'll telegraph to Dublin the first thing in the morning."

"To-night we can do nothing, I suppose?"

"I've done the utmost I can for him to-night; but I'll sit up with him myself. And now, my dear friend, do you go to bed; I'll have you called if I want you."

Barbara in due time retired to her room; but midnight and the small hours of the morning found her still wakeful. She flitted restlessly between her own room and Anthony's, listening at the door for any sound of him, peeping in and beckoning for the doctor if she heard a rustle of the bed-clothes. Between her rounds she had snatches of troubled sleep, and at six in the morning she insisted on taking the doctor's place, sending him to get a few hours' rest, for he had his rounds to go at breakfast time.

Anthony continued lethargic, only muttering a little at times. In this condition he remained, with little change,

throughout the day.

Arthur was at home before lunch time, and deeply shocked on learning his father's state. He had not seen his aunt since his marriage, and what he had heard from

his friend at the bank was still sorely on his mind. He would, however, have kept it from her at this time had

she not unwittingly led him up to the very point.

"I never," said Barbara, "thought so much of it as just now. But do you know, Arthur, I am as ignorant as the wall what state your father's in with his money. There must be plenty, of course; but I declare I haven't the least idea how much there is, nor where it is, nor how it's to be got at if it's wanted."

Arthur hesitated, and then began to tell what he

knew.

"The question is," said he, "whether there's plenty at all."

Babara sat amazed while he talked.

"What has he done with the money at all?" said she at length.

"What, indeed!" returned Arthur, "that is just the

question."

To tell the truth, a miserable suspicion had been growing up in Arthur's mind which had Dora for its Dora's inexplicable antipathy to Arthur was obiect. only matched by Arthur's inexplicable antipathy to Dora. These two had nothing against each other; but she had always dreaded him, as he had always distrusted her. Arthur had persuaded himself, against all ostensible reason, that Dora must be looked to for an explanation of the drain upon Anthony's resources. Looking back. he remembered that it was since Dora's coming that his father had begun to be mysterious in his money matters. He scarcely knew how to hint this to his aunt, he scarcely liked to hint it. With Lady Frayne he had talked it openly; and as she was at one with him in his general opinion of Dora, their suspicions had harmonized on this point also. But he knew that his aunt was wholly on Dora's side, that the kindliness which had been between them from the first had deepened into - affection, at all events upon Barbara's part.

But now he was brought right up to the matter. He began by a remote suggestion, thrown out in the form of

a query.

"What was Mrs. Lytton—Mrs. Trenchard, I should say—taking from my father, Aunt Barbara?"

"Your father paid her a hundred a year," said Miss

Nugent. "Why do you ask that?"

"Because," answered Arthur, "I am inclined to think that Mrs. Trenchard might be able to tell us something as to the way in which my father has been getting rid of his money?"

"What do you mean by that, Arthur?"

"My dear aunt, it is since Mrs. Trenchard came here that there has been all this mystery about the money. You told me yourself that just before I came home my father talked only of spending. He was going to recreate the place; to rebuild, to refurnish, to buy Gravelmount; I don't know what he was not going to do. All this stopped in a moment. Whose counsel has he taken all these months but Mrs. Trenchard's?"

"Arthur," said Miss Nugent earnestly, "I don't know what you are thinking of, but I am certain you are

wrong. Mrs. Trenchard is——"

"Well now, dear aunt, who is Mrs. Trenchard?"

"What matters that?" replied Miss Nugent, energetically. "She has been the best woman in the world since she came to us."

"We know nothing of her," said Arthur, "except that she has behaved herself properly here — and

managed a good marriage for herself."

"Arthur," said his aunt, "I don't like to hear you talking this way. You've some prejudice against Mrs. Trenchard. 'Tis not like you to judge people whom you've no knowledge of. I know Mrs. Trenchard a great deal better than you do, and it hurts me that you should talk of her in this manner."

Arthur, with his kindly smile, shrugged his shoulders

and said no more.

In the afternoon of that day Anthony's condition began to undergo a change; from that of passive lethargy he passed into one of high fever. The doctor, who had anticipated this change, had left instructions with Barbara for its treatment; and as soon as the alteration commenced in him she at once took up her place beside him. Anthony's speech began to be more frequent and distinct, though only the wanderings of fever. Barbara paid little heed to the words that dropped from him, addressed, as they almost always were, to an invisible imaginary audience.

Towards morning, when the delirium took on its most extravagant character, Barbara, whose efforts at wakefulness had been weakening, was roused all at once by some

singular disjointed utterances like these:

"Mrs. Lytton . . . she'll have the money . . . Kedagh's daughter sure enough . . . take it from me . . ."

Barbara looked at her brother in blank bewilderment; his face peered out from amidst the close bandages with a strained and agitated expression. She laid her hand upon his arm endeavouring to calm him; but still and in spite of herself listening intently for some further word from him.

He paused when he felt her touch; then turning to her with a half gleam of consciousness in his wild eyes, he said imploringly: "You'll not let her take the money."

"No one shall touch the money," said Barbara, soothingly, but she longed to add, "Where is it?"

Anthony lay still for some time, then all at once:

"She's got it; she's running away with it. 'Tis Kedagh's daughter. Kedagh gave it all to me."

He tried to spring from the bed, struggled for a few moments in Barbara's arms, then lay back exhausted and

became perfectly quiet again.

When the doctor saw his patient the next day he looked graver than ever. He inquired anxiously how he had passed the night, and promised to call again in the afternoon.

Barbara was sorely troubled and perplexed by the extraordinary words that had fallen from Anthony in the night. As she thought over them they seemed to chime so strangely with the suspicions to which Arthur had given expression only a few hours earlier.

Ought she to tell Arthur?

She could not persuade herself to do so; her heart still clung to Dora. After all, what had she heard but the vague distorted utterance of a brain diseased? Anthony's mind had been fixed upon his money for weeks past; Dora had been a stranger under their roof; what more likely than that in his delirium the phantom of his money should be associated with dread of a phantom Dora. Convinced that no true or substantial reason could be attached to her brother's words, doggedly refusing to let herself think ill of Dora, she resolved to say nothing to Arthur. But she had not foreseen what was likely enough to happen, and what, indeed, did happen on that same day.

Barbara was in the sick-room in the afternoon. Anthony had been comparatively quiet since the morning; they were expecting the doctor, and that he would be able to pronounce his patient to be in a more hopeful

condition.

Arthur came noiselessly into the room, to beg his aunt

to let him take her place for a little.

As they were speaking in whispered tones at the bedside, Anthony suddenly broke out with the very words he had before used in Barbara's hearing:

"Mrs. Lytton. . . . She'll have the money. . . . Kedagh's daughter, sure enough. . . . take it from me. . . ." A pause and then, "'Tis Kedagh's daughter, she's got it; Kedagh gave it all to me."

Barbara laid her hand on Arthur's arm half beseechingly and half in fright, as Anthony flung the words out

in his big voice.

But for his love for his aunt Arthur would not have been able to keep back a look of triumph at what he heard, and at once took to be a confirmation in part of

his suspicions against Dora.

At that moment Dr. Maguire entered the room. Anthony's words, which the doctor had only heard in part, had no significance for him, who was concerned only at finding his patient in such an excited condition. Arthur, however, could not but return to the subject

with his aunt at the first opportunity that presented itself.

"Well, Aunt Barbara," said he, "what do you think now?"

"Oh, Arthur, my dear, 'tis nonsense, just nonsense,' answered his aunt. "Why, didn't you hear? He fancies that she's your Uncle Kedagh's daughter, as if that could be and we never to have known it. I'm pretty certain that your Cousin Bessie died long ago. Is it likely your Uncle Kedagh would have left all his money to us if she'd been alive? And if such an impossible notion as that could have come into your poor father's head, what should prevent him from imagining anything else?"

"Was Bessie my cousin's name?" said Arthur, still

pressing that point.

"Yes, Bessie was the name your father always used

when he spoke of her in his letters."

Arthur got up and walked across the drawing-room to the place where the old family Bible always lay, and began to turn over its leaves.

"Arthur, you are very obstinate," said his aunt,

observing what he was at.

"But see here, Aunt Barbara," said he; "Cousin Bessie's first name is Theodora, so you see there is a Dora, after all."

Barbara went over and looked for herself at the name recorded in full in the family Bible—"Theodora

Elizabeth."

"And," said Arthur, "the sight of Cousin 'Dora's' name reminds me of something else. Don't you remember, Aunt Barbara, telling me when I came home from Africa, that Mrs. Lytton's voice reminded you at times of Uncle Kedagh's?"

In fact Dora's voice had at first put Barbara very strongly in mind of the voice of her brother in Australia, a voice very different in tone and quality from Anthony's, though when she had begun to grow familiar with Dora's voice she thought about it no more.

She was puzzled, vexed, disquieted; but she would

not give in.

"There's nothing in the world in it," she insisted; "it's a wrong and absurd notion that you've got hold of, Arthur."

"Where is Mrs. Trenchard now?" pursued Arthur quietly.

"I don't know exactly where they are," replied his

aunt.

"When are they to be back?"

"I don't know that either, but it's not likely they will be long."

"Did Mrs. Trenchard leave no address with

you?"

"No," replied Barbara, "they are to be moving about all the time they are away, and won't be able to receive any letters."

"I must say," said Arthur, "all this looks to me like

rather clever management."

Poor Barbara by this time was almost in tears, and she was positively relieved to hear Dr. Maguire's voice calling

her again to the sick-chamber.

Scarcely had Barbara gone upstairs when Lady Frayne and Kitty arrived to make their inquiries. They had followed Arthur from Dublin that morning, on receiving a letter from him respecting the desperate condition of his father.

When their first questions as to Anthony's immediate state had been answered, Arthur had to give them the

whole history of the storm and its consequences.

The door of the drawing-room stood open; they heard Barbara come out on to the landing above, and give whispered instructions to somebody. Kitty, with her quick, though gentle sympathy, rose up quietly and went out of the room and up the stairs. Lady Frayne bent towards Arthur and said:

"Did you tell your aunt what you heard from Tresidder?"

"Yes," answered Arthur, "I have told her everything."

"Well?" continued Lady Frayne.

"She knows no more than I do," said Arthur.

Lady Frayne sighed.

"I'm terribly sorry for your poor father," said she, but one can't help feeling that this other is a serious matter, too."

"Yes," answered Arthur, "one has to admit that, though, of course, at the moment, one thinks as little about it as possible."

"To be sure," assented Lady Frayne, "to be sure

and yet, 'tis not a thing to be overlooked."

Arthur was silent. He could talk freely with his aunt, who was as a mother to him; but he did not like discussing with Lady Frayne the money matters of his father immediately beneath the room in which his father lay

within sight of death.

Within himself, however, he could not but admit that this aspect of the situation was grave in the extreme. He was so hopelessly in the dark about it all. He would not say to himself that his father had treated him unfairly, but—well, was it not strange, the only son never to have had one generous word from the father who had been suddenly enriched; never to have been taken into confidence about those riches; never to have had sight of them; never to have had the littlest share in them?

For this was precisely the footing on which Arthur stood with his father in regard to Kedagh's fortune. In all that concerned his money, Anthony had held his son at arm's length ever since his return home. He had made half promises and promises; he had held out hopes, not one of which had been realized. Since his father had grown to wealth Arthur had been made to

feel himself a stranger in the house.

And while it had been thus with him, he had seen, or fancied he had seen, that the place which might have been the son's had little by little been usurped by the stranger Dora. At any rate, it had not, and could not have failed of notice how greatly Dora had been in the confidence of Anthony; as far, at least, as could be judged by one who had not been in the confidence of Anthony himself.

Touching that vital affair of the money, Dora, of course, had never been in Anthony's confidence at all; but it seemed to Arthur that facts pointed quite in the opposite direction.

Kitty had run upstairs to whisper an inquiry if she

could help Barbara.

"What does Maguire say of your father?" asked Lady Frayne.

"He gives scarcely any hope." answered Arthur.

Lady Frayne sighed again. She was touched on her old friend's behalf, and desperately puzzled about his money.

"How did you find things at home?" said Arthur.

"Quiet enough; but not too comfortable," answered her ladyship. "We'll be a little while settling down again. Ah! doctor, how is he now?"

The doctor shook his head without speaking.

"Dear, dear," said Lady Frayne, "is it so bad as that?"

"Have you given up all hope, doctor?" asked Arthur.

"You see," said the doctor, "there's no strength left in him; he bled so long before they found him. He can't stand against the fever."

"Does he still lose strength?" said Lady Frayne.

"Every minute," answered the doctor. "I suppose you know that we had Fitzgerald over yesterday from Dublin, but he said we could do only what I am doing—fight the fever step by step as we can. His mind is wandering in the strangest way; he has a notion that somebody is taking his money from him."

"Oh," said Lady Frayne, "that's a queer idea for him

to have."

"It is," said the doctor; "but there's no idea too queer for delirium."

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### THERE IS MUCH TO CLEAR UP.

ANTHONY lay a-dying in his chamber. The end of the death-struggle had become now only a question of hours; the doctor had said that his utmost was done, and that it would avail nothing.

Arthur, tired out with watching, had strolled down to the ruined tower. It was the first time that he had taken a fair survey of the wreck that the storm had wrought. Nothing had been touched there since the night when Anthony was carried in to his death-bed. The wintry sun glimmered on the desolate scene, a scene familiar to Arthur from his boyish days. The destruction of the tower seemed like the destruction of all the old life at Carriconna. He called to mind the legend that when the tower fell the head of the old house should fall with it, and there he was, standing, under the wreck of it, and every moment expecting the summons to close his father's eyes.

He climbed the broken stairs to the second floor of the tower, which was now its highest, and the wintry panorama lay bare and bleak before him. There was ice at the edges of the lake; he remembered rowing there with Kitty in the summer. Come what might, he had Kitty now, and the thought of her was his best comfort. Then the image of the future assailed him. and a vague dread rose up in and filled his mind. Those broad acres he looked out upon—would he be able to maintain them? Still the same haunting fear about the fortune that had so mysteriously vanished. And all the while he was standing right above it. He descended to the ground-floor, stepping over the fallen stones that hid the trap-door which led to the treasurechamber of the old man, who would never count his gold in it again. And poor Arthur, thinking that all the gold had gone, and that by-and-by he would have to tell

his wife that she had a beggar for her husband; for of late Anthony had been spending on the estate even less than he had done in the days of his poverty, and it had seemed as though he had scattered the old and the new fortune both.

Arthur went out, merely swinging behind him the door that his father had so jealously locked. Amongst the stones he had stepped over there were some that had the marks of his father's blood; and strewn here and there in the midst of them were fragments of the pretty nick-nacks with which Dora had set her own s amp upon the toy observatory, whose débris heaped the turf at the tower's base.

Arthur noted a little wicker-basket, the fragments of an ornamental fan, some pieces of a japanese vase and bits of the brasswork of the unlucky telescope.

He heard himself called from the house, and went hot foot up the sloping lawn, but before he had gained the darkened room his father was dead.

"He never spoke," whispered Barbara, her tears kept back as yet by the first dread sight of death. "He just gave a little gasp and his arms went to his sides—and he was gone."

Arthur looked silent and dry-eyed upon the rigid figure in the bed, the head and temples swathed in bandages that looked dusky against the whiteness of the face.

The servants came stealthily into the room and stood at the foot of the bed. Barbara, overcome at length, sank down and broke into tears. At this moment Kitty appeared in the doorway, stepping softly, the folds of her riding-habit gathered closely in one hand. She grew a little white as her glance fell on the mute figure upon the bed, and the group of servants at its foot; then she crossed the room swiftly, and passing her arm round Barbara she whispered:

"Come with me, dear Aunt Barbara, you are overtired," and led her gently from the room.

It was a very puzzled group that a few days later sat

in the dining-room at Carriconna. Anthony had been laid along with his hero, Buck, in the old family vault, and the servants had dropped back into the routine familiar to them for years past, only that Arthur was now "the master." But a master with an anxious inheritance, for no trace could be found of the large fortune Anthony had recently inherited, and beyond a few hundreds lying in the bank at Dublin, the Carriconna estate was no richer than it had been before Kedagh's legacy arrived.

"We shall, I suppose, learn something from the father's will," Arthur had said to Barbara on the day of

his father's funeral.

"If he made one," his aunt replied. "I never heard him speak about it since the one he made after your mother died, Arthur."

"Oh, he must have made one; he would never have left so much money undisposed of. He did not talk much of late, you know, Aunt Barbara."

"He did not, indeed, 'tis true," assented Barbara, "and he was plenty of times in Dublin, and may have instructed Mr. Bucknall; he will know."

But Mr. Bucknall proved to be as ignorant of Anthony's affairs as every one else; and he and Arthur and Barbara sat and looked at each other in blank amazement.

"It's the most extraordinary case I ever knew," said the old lawyer. "Your brother, ma'am, seems to have taken no one into his confidence. I have only the old will, dated four and-twenty years ago, which leaves Carriconna and all his personal possessions to Arthur, his only child, and names you, Miss Barbara, sole guardian until Arthur is of age. To tell you the truth, I have been so puzzled myself that I have made inquiries in Dublin, but I cannot hear that Anthony had dealings with any other solicitor. If he had left a will with any one we should have heard of it as soon as Anthony's death was known; and that, as you are aware, was in all the Irish papers last week."

"To be sure it was," said Barbara, "to be sure it was." Arthur's face grew graver and more grave as the con-

ference proceeded. Mr. Bucknall had been his last hope. If the lawyer knew nothing, of whom could he seek information? His thoughts reverted obstinately to Dora, although—out of consideration for Aunt Barbara—he had not mentioned her to the lawyer, nor his suspicions about her, nor Anthony's strange wanderings. But he would not feel satisfied until Dora had been asked if she could throw any light on this great mystery, which involved so much for him and for Kitty.

He had met Sergeant Jones on the road the day before and had asked him casually where his master was spending his honeymoon. But the sergeant's answer was like Barbara's.

"The master left no address, sir; the mistress wanted him to have a real good rest and change, and not to be worried with letters. They started north, sir, but whether they're still in Ireland, or have crossed the channel, I don't know. The master said we was to get on with the renovating the rooms, and he would give us fair notice of their home-coming."

"They may be in America by this," said Arthur to himself, as he walked moodily home.

They had been consulting the better part of the afternoon, that mystified trio, and the lawyer had risen to prepare for his journey back to Dublin, when the evening post arrived.

There had been a good many letters at Carriconna during the last week—letters of sympathy and letters of business—but to-night there was only one, and John looked uncertain to whom he should hand it, but finally presented it to Arthur with an apologetic bow.

It was addressed to Anthony Nugent, Esqr., and bore the Australian postmark.

"It is for my father," said Arthur, in a tone of surprise, "and from Australia. From Cleaver and Sons, solicitors," he added, after scrutinizing the seal.

"Your uncle's lawyers," explained Miss Nugent.

"Open it, Arthur; perhaps they know about the money."

Arthur broke the seal and read aloud the following

short note:

"DEAR SIR,—Since our former letter to you in reference to the daughter of our late client, Mr. Kedagh Nugent, we have learned accidentally that Mrs. Lytton is a widow. Her husband died in Paris, where he was, we believe, practising as a physician. Thinking this information may be of interest—and possibly of use—to you, we transmit it at once, and remain, dear sir,

"Faithfully yours,

"CLEAVER & SONS.

"Anthony Nugent, Esqr."

"Then she is Kedagh's daughter!" exclaimed Barbara, with something very like a gasp. "I always felt she was not like a stranger."

"And my father knew of it!" exclaimed Arthur:

"this accounts for his delirious words."

"Arthur," said his aunt solemnly, "you may depend on it he has given her back her own, 'twould be just like

him. That's where the money is."

"But why not tell us?" said Arthur. "We should not have baulked his generosity, Aunt Barbara. Why should she come here as a stranger? Why should he keep the secret from us? Why return her the money in such a mysterious manner?"

"But," said the lawyer, "that question apart, you're not meaning to suggest that Anthony gave up the whole

of his fortune to his niece?"

"He'd not do that, I suppose," said Barbara.

"She seemed always to have a great deal of influence over him," said Arthur.

"She would never use her influence unfairly, I am

sure of that," said his aunt emphatically.

"My dear aunt, we really do not know in what way

she used it."

"Upon my word," exclaimed the lawyer a little testily, "we don't know anything at all. All this is the merest conjecture. We are no nearer, or but very little nearer, to facts than we were before. Where is this niece? I never heard of her till now."

Barbara in a few words told the lawyer the story of Dora's coming to them from Paris, of her sojourn at Carriconna, and of her marriage with Trenchard.

"A very singular business indeed," said the lawyer; "a sort of romance, I suppose you might call it. Do you say that her father left nothing whatever to her?"

"Nothing whatever, as far as we have known," replied Miss Nugent; "indeed we all thought that she was no

longer living."

"I wonder whether she knew, when she came over from Paris," said Mr. Bucknall, "that it was to her uncle she was engaging herself, and that her father's fortune had been left to him?"

"That would have provided her with a motive, at all

events," said Arthur.

"To be sure it would," answered the lawyer. "And where do you say the lady is now?"

"They're on their honeymoon," said Barbara.

"Of course, of course; honeymoon after marriage; that's proper enough. But you have some address, I suppose?"

"No. I don't think they had a settled plan them-

selves."

"Ah, wanted to have the world to themselves; well, that's natural and proper enough, too. But you expect them back soon, no doubt?"

Arthur smiled; but Aunt Barbara was ready with a prompt assurance, when the roll of wheels upon the

gravel interrupted her.

She was sitting in the window seat, looking out upon the avenue. She glanced up. "It is they!" she cried joyously.

"What!" exclaimed Arthur and the lawyer together.
"Tis Mrs. Trenchard and her husband. I knew well
enough that Dora wouldn't be long in coming if only she

knew what had happened."

It was Dora and her husband indeed. They were on a station car, and had evidently driven straight from the train. Dora wore the grey travelling dress in which she had started on her honeymoon; she had added to it some black ribbons, and her bonnet was of the same colour.

Arthur was just in time to see Trenchard handing her down from the car, whence she was received into the open arms of Miss Nugent.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

#### EXPLANATIONS.

What had brought Dora back with such dramatic suddenness? She and Trenchard had been spending the first days of their honeymoon in a far-off quiet spot on the coast, intending to wander thence, with no set plans, whithersoever their fancy might impel them. Dora told her husband that she wanted to explore the less-known portions of the Irish and Scottish coasts, and this sufficed for him. In making her marriage, Dora had not shrunk from the future. She had been prepared unflinchingly to face all possible issues of her position as Trenchard's wife; and it had been a deliberate purpose with her that their honeymoon should be spent amid scenes where temptation would be least likely to assail him. What had looked to Arthur in his suspicious mood like the clever management of a treacherous and perhaps guilty woman, was in reality the clever management of a wife who desired and had resolved to be, for a period, her husband's physician, without appearing such. She would prevent rather than cure the evil. She had not entered again upon married life with a romantic notion that she was to know nothing thenceforward but love and happiness. She saw clearly that the cloud which had dimmed her husband's past would not quickly shrink; that at the best it must be for a long while to come a spot more or less dark on their horizon.

Dora had found her scheme entirely successful during the first week of their honeymoon, and for almost the first time in his life, Trenchard was entirely happy. Spite of the wintry weather, they spent the greater part of the day in the open air; sometimes on the sea, sometimes riding, sometimes driving, taking whatever accommodation they chanced upon and enjoying the entire novelty of their surroundings to the full.

Then at a little wayside place, half farm, half inn, where they had stopped for whatever they could get in the way of luncheon, Dora chanced to take up a soiled copy of an Irish paper that lay upon the kitchen-table. The familiar word "Carriconna" caught her eye at once, and in a paragraph headed "Great Storm at Carriconna," she read of the destruction of the tower and the death of Anthony.

This intelligence, so utterly unexpected, was a rude shock to Dora.

"Oh, Edmund," she said, "look at this."

A hundred thoughts and anxious questionings rushed across her mind whilst Trenchard was reading the paragraph. Had her uncle died without revealing the secret in the tower? From the description which the newspaper gave of his illness, she thought it more than probable that he had carried his secret to the grave.

If that were so, then Dora was its sole living de-

positary.

"Most extraordinary and sad," said Trenchard, laying down the newspaper. "Dearest, you must write to Miss Nugent at once. We must both write."

But Dora could not be satisfied with writing. How could her pen tell all that she had to say, all that she

must say, to her aunt?

She glanced again at the newspaper; it gave few details concerning Anthony's brief illness, but spoke of him as having lain unconscious during the two days that preceded his death. Yes, Dora felt certain that her uncle's secret was now hers, and hers only.

"Edmund, dear," she said, "I think I must go back

to Carriconna."

Trenchard, of course, was little prepared for such an interruption of their honeymoon.

"My darling," he said, "why go back? Mr. Nugent is dead, and doubtless buried by now. Who would expect you in the circumstances, and what could you

possibly do?"

"You don't understand anything about it, dear," replied Dora coaxingly. "There is a story to tell, and I must tell it to you, and then you will see why I think that I ought to go back to Carriconna for a day or two. First of all, Edmund, you must know that Mr. Nugent was my uncle, that Miss Nugent is my aunt, and Arthur my cousin."

Trenchard sat down in the chair nearest to him and stared at Dora as if he began to doubt her sanity. But

Dora only laughed at his startled face.

"Here comes lunch," she said, "actually a fowl, killed and cooked within the hour. Eat, Edmund; I have several more mines to spring upon you."

"But, my love," said Trenchard gravely, as he began

his lunch, "are you serious?"

"Quite serious," replied Dora. "You know you would never let me tell you anything of my former life, and I grew too content with the present to trouble you with the past. It was not of much consequence, so I let Briefly, Edmund, I am the only child of it alone. Kedagh Nugent; I disobeyed my father's wishes, and married Herbert Lytton. From that time my father ignored my existence, and at his death he left all his fortune to Uncle Anthony. Then, by the merest accident, after I had lost my husband I saw Uncle Anthony's advertisement for some one to help him in the study of astronomy. Curiosity urged me to go and see what the uncle was like who had inherited all my father's money; I think I felt rather wicked and revengeful too," added Dora, laughing a little nervously. had wild and romantic ideas of regaining my lost patrimony; anyway I had my living to make, and it was an easy and comfortable way of making it. Then I met you, Edmund," she continued tenderly, "and I ceased to think about the money; you lifted me out of my bad, sorded self.

Trenchard rose from his seat and bent down and took

her face in his two hands and kissed her lips.

"And you, my darling," he said earnestly, "have lifted me from darkness into light. What would my fate have been if you had never gone to Carriconna, my

brave, true wife?"

"I knew you were my fate, Edmund, that night we pulled your horse out of the bog! From that time my interest in my lost inheritance began to be as nothing. No one heart can hold both love and money; either the one or the other must be driven out. So I left the money, though nearly the whole fortune was in my hands."

Then Dora proceeded to amaze her husband with an account of Anthony's mysterious conduct, his secret visits to the tower, her own overpowering curiosity to know what it was he carried there in the old portmanteau; and lastly the extraordinary discovery that had

rewarded her investigations.

"I shall be so glad to tell them, if they do not already know, Edmund. This secret has weighed on me like a nightmare. I did not feel that I had any right to speak whilst Uncle Anthony lived, and yet I had to listen to all dear Aunt Barbara's troubles about that miserable money, and about Arthur's position, and I don't know what more. And besides," she added, "I was really a little ashamed to tell any one that I had been prying about after Uncle Anthony's treasure, though I never imagined for one moment what that treasure was."

"Of course you did not, dear," exclaimed Trenchard heartily; "it was a most innocent curiosity, and they will have great reason to rejoice that your curiosity was aroused if Anthony died without telling them anything. And now, love," he added, rising from table, "we must go back and collect our belongings, and take the first

train to-morrow for Carriconna."

"But only for a day or two, Edmund," said Dora coaxingly; "we shall come back again. You will not let this spoil our honeymoon?"

"Nothing in the world could do that! No, we will go

to Carriconna, and as soon as you have seen Aunt Barbara, we will come back, and begin this honeymoon all over again."

"Dear Aunt Barbara!" said Dora, "I am so glad she

is my aunt!"

And Barbara was equally glad to claim and welcome Dora as her niece. Her beaming look of satisfaction as she led Mr. and Mrs. Trenchard into the house, said

plainly to Arthur, "I told you so."

"I knew you would come as soon as you had word of it," said Aunt Barbara, as she carried Dora off upstairs, leaving Arthur to start Mr. Bucknall for his train, and to entertain Trenchard. "But tell me, how did you hear? You know I couldn't send to you, for I had no address, and even if I had had one I don't think I would have brought you back, though you may guess how much I have missed you these dreadful days."

"Dear Aunt Barbara," exclaimed Dora; "I wish I

had been with you."

The name Dora gave her fell strangely upon Barbara's ears.

"Does she know it then?" thought Barbara. She put her hands up on Dora's shoulders—Dora was much the taller of the pair—and looked her in the face.

"I am your aunt," said she, "and you are my dear

niece, but how long have you known that?"

As her aunt said this, however, it was Dora's turn for astonishment.

"Why, how long have you known it?" she said.

"Only just," answered Miss Nugent, smiling.

"But how?" said Dora, more bewildered than ever.

"I thought it had been my secret only."

"Your uncle must have known it this long time; a letter has just come for him from your father's solicitors in Australia; 'twas from that I learned it. Anthony talked about it while he was delirious; about that and the money; he talked about nothing else."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dora, "he talked only about me and the money—now I know why he hid the money."

"Hid the money?" queried Barbara in her turn.

"What do you mean, dear? What money did he hide, and why did he hide it?"

"So you know nothing about the money, Aunt Bar-

bara?"

"Nothing in the world, dear. It seems to me that nobody knows; Mr. Bucknall—that's the solicitor—doesn't know; and the bankers know nothing except about the small balance with them; and Arthur knows no more than the rest."

"Nobody has explored the tower, then, Aunt Bar-

bara?"

"The tower, Dora?—no; what has the tower to do with it? I declare I haven't borne to think of that terrible tower since the night of the storm."

"I shall show you what is in the tower, Aunt Barbara," said Dora. "Oh, how glad I am that I

came."

"But tell me, dear; tell me at once," pleaded Barbara. "And then I want to know about yourself. Dear, dear, the mystery and the trouble we've had these days. And I not knowing what to think of poor dear

Anthony leaving us in such a plight as this."

"Aunt Barbara," said Dora, "the tower is full of money, full of it. I found it accidentally, at least almost accidentally, for I never knew what I was looking for. There is an underground room in the tower, and I don't know how much money stowed away there in bags. I did not dare to tell whilst Uncle Anthony lived, for I knew how secret he was about it, and as I had found it without his knowledge I thought I had no right to betray his secret. This is why I have come back, for I thought from what the newspapers said that poor Uncle Anthony had most likely died without telling anybody."

"Hid it in the tower—a room full of gold—I declare I don't know what to make of it," said Barbara, hopeless

surmise written on her features.

Then turning the conversation, as if for relief, she went on to tell Dora in detail the short sad tale of Anthony's accident, illness and death; of the wretched anxiety with which she had waited while the ruins were being searched; of the carrying in of Anthony, of the doctor's coming, of the long delirium, then of the death and the funeral.

"And how sorely I wanted you through it all!" she ended.

"Poor Aunt Barbara! And I knowing nothing;

selfishly happy in my honeymoon."

"No, my dear, no; not selfishly; for you came quickly enough as soon as you knew—and in the middle of the honeymoon, too. And the honeymoon—but I needn't ask if that has been a happy one, your face tells me that."

Dora smiled.

"And I am going to send you back to finish it, depend upon that," added Barbara. "Oh, but this money, this money—and you have really seen it down there, down in the tower? I never heard of any underground place in it at all."

"You shall see it to-morrow, Aunt Barbara."

"Yes, yes, to-morrow will be time enough. Now that I have you with me I am not troubled about anything. But we must tell Arthur. But, my dear, tell me first, why did you come to us as a stranger, and why did you keep yourself unknown to us all those months?"

"Ah, I came here in a bad spirit. I was envious and angry because my father had deserted me and left every-

thing away from me. I--"

"Well, dear," said her aunt soothingly, "I can't wonder that you took it to heart, and I can't approve of your father treating you so. For I cannot think that you did anything bad enough to deserve it."

"I married against my father's will," answered Dora.
"I know now that his wishes were the right ones, but I

had my punishment."

"Did your father leave nothing at all to you, Dora?"
"Nothing. From the day that I left home I never heard from him."

"Arthur will not treat you that way," said Barbara with kind decision. "He will set everything right."

"No," said Dora emphatically; "there is nothing wrong and nothing shall be altered now. And," she added, with a look of absolute, almost rapturous contentment, "what is there that I want now? I have a husband who loves me, and who has more than enough for both of us."

Barbara kissed her affectionately.

"I don't think Arthur will be satisfied to leave it in that way," she said; "but we will say no more about it at present. Now, my dear, you just rest a little before dinner. You must be fairly tired out, and I will give Arthur a hint about this wonderful Aladdin's cave."

## CHAPTER XLV.

#### A WEDDING PRESENT.

DORA and her husband remained at Carriconna that night, for they had sent no intimation to Moyrath of their return.

"We need only stay a couple of nights, dear," Dora had said entreatingly, "and Aunt Barbara will like to have us. If we once go home, we may not want to leave again directly, and that would so shorten our holiday."

"Just as you like, pet," replied Trenchard equably; "so long as Aunt Barbara will keep both of us Carriconna and Moyrath are the same to me."

"Of course she will keep both of us," said Dora

laughing; "the idea!"

"I can stroll down and surprise William in the morning," said her husband. "The sergeant's face will be a study if I turn up alone and unannounced."

But the next morning was fully taken up with operations in the tower. Even Barbara was excited about it.

It had been arranged overnight that the matter of the hidden money was to be kept strictly to themselves. No

one outside the family circle was to hear a whisper of Anthony's strange freak. To preserve this secrecy involved some labour for Arthur and Trenchard. When they, with Barbara and Dora, entered the tower on the following morning they found it would be no easy matter to reach the spot where Dora said that the trap-door would be found. The great loose stones from the ruined tower lay piled about in heaps, and it was no short task to remove them one by one. But they all worked with zeal, Barbara lending her help, her hands protected by her thick gardening gloves. The débris once cleared away the rest was easy. Arthur made slight trouble about raising the heavy trap-door, and then he stood aside for Dora to lead the way down the short flight of steps. When she reached the foot of the steps she stopped and lighted a candle with which she had provided herself, and led the way, followed closely by the others, along the passage and into the chamber.

"Supposing Uncle Anthony should have suspected anything and moved his treasure?" she thought as she entered the dark vault. She crossed at once to the recess and stretched out her hand. It was all right. The old wooden pigeon-house was there, and the tightly stuffed canvas bags were there. She could feel them

wedged in the pigeon holes.

"Now, Cousin Arthur, look in there," she said, as she shaded the candle with her hand and held it beside the pigeon-house.

"What is that?" said Arthur breathlessly, running his hand over the surface of one of the bags.

"Take it out and open it," answered Dora.

He took the bag and carried it, as Dora had done once before, to the grating in the wall that served for a window.

"Gold!" he cried, unfastening the bag and taking out one of the pieces. "Gold! It is full of gold!"

He crossed the chamber to the pigeon-house again.

"Why, it is stuffed with bags! and some of them are twice as big as this one."

"Yes," said Dora, "and that is not all. Here is a

box crammed with notes." And she pulled off the lid of the tin box that stood on the floor in the recess. The others looked on in silent amazement.

What was the ghost of Anthony about that it did not rise up to trouble these intruders? But there was no such uncanny interruption of the scene, which proceeded amid the increasing wonderment of Dora's guests, as the vast extent of the treasure was slowly revealed to them.

The tin box when examined was found to contain more than bank notes; there were memoranda of various securities, amongst them one relating to an investment of ten thousand pounds. In short, what with the gold, the notes and the memoranda, they had the whole fortune of Anthony under their eyes.

"There is no trace of a will here, however," said

Arthur.

"It is not wanted," said Trenchard. "The old one that you have is sufficient."

"And what in the world are we going to do with all

this gold?" asked Barbara.

"Well, I think it has lain here long enough, at any rate," said Arthur.

As he spoke, Kitty's voice was heard calling to him from above.

"What has become of you all? Where are you?" called Kitty, who was wandering round and about the tower in search of them.

"Come down here," cried Arthur, and went up to the trap-door to meet her.

Kitty looked scared at the sight of him.

"Has anything else happened?" she asked.

"Yes," said Arthur; "but you need not look so scared. Come down here and see."

She took his hand and followed him down the dark passage.

"It is nothing dreadful, is it?" whispered Kitty, whom the darkness of the place made timid.

"Nothing more dreadful than the vanished fortune; it is all hidden away down here."

And Kitty looked, as the others had done, with scarce

believing eyes, at the heaped up bullion in Anthony's strange treasure-chamber, and felt the bags, and lifted one, and said she supposed there must be at least two or three hundred pounds altogether. At which the others laughed, and then they all went up again, and the trapdoor was made fast and covered over as before.

Next day, Dora and Trenchard returned to complete their honeymoon. But before they started Barbara had a little interview with Dora, when she said that Arthur was very anxious, with Dora's leave, to offer her the ten thousand pound investment as a wedding present.

Dora, though touched, could not at first be brought to yield. Arthur was called in to add his entreaties to

Barbara's.

"I could not possibly enjoy my share," said he, "unless you will take this small one."

Then Dora beat down what false pride remained in

her and gave a gracious assent.

Trenchard was not to be told until they had settled together again, and so she and her bridegroom went off, and as a memento of Anthony, Dora took with her in her pocket the handbook of astronomy with the help of which the old man had made such diligent efforts to get some understanding of the distance of Jupiter.

THE END.

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